UNCOLLECTED ESSAYS

450 copies of this book have been printed on Van Gelder hand-made paper and the type distributed.

UNCOLLECTED ESSAYS BY WALTER PATER

PRINTED FOR THOMAS B. MOSHER AND PUBLISHED BY HIM AT 45 EXCHANGE STREET PORTLAND MAINE MDCCCCIII

NOTE

THE twelve uncollected articles now brought together for the first time, simply belong to the realm of higher literary journalism; and, like the *Essays from The Guardian*, "although their positive value may be slight," are of precisely similar interest and worth. Decidedly *not* to be ranked with Pater's published works, what we here offer should be viewed as one might view a collection of letters, if they existed, "to the inner circle of his friends." As such these criticisms have their place, and cannot fail of welcome from those who would share the few last "crumbs from the table of his delicate and never copious feast."

That any further additions will be made to these papers is extremely improbable. The better to distinguish this reprint from the Col-

lected Works the same *format* has been chosen as in our reissue of *The Guardian* essays, which was, in turn, a facsimile of the volume privately printed by The Chiswick Press in 1896.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. SYMONDS'S "RENAISSANCE IN ITALY"	1
2. M. LEMAÎTRE'S "SERENUS, AND OTHER TALES"	13
3. THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT	49
4. WORDSWORTH	65
5. A POET WITH SOMETHING TO SAY	77
6. "IT IS THYSELF"	87
7. FABRE'S "TOUSSAINT GALABRU" .	93
8. "CORRESPONDANCE DE GUSTAVE FLAUBERT"	101
9. "A CENTURY OF REVOLUTION" .	115
10. A NOVEL BY MR. OSCAR WILDE .	123
11. MR. GEORGE MOORE AS AN ART CRITIC	135
12. INTRODUCTION TO SHADWELL'S DANTE	143

I

SYMONDS'S "RENAISSANCE IN ITALY"

THE ACADEMY, JULY 31, 1875

SYMONDS'S "RENAISSANCE IN ITALY"

Renaissance in Italy; the Age of the Despots. By John Addington Symonds. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1875.)

THIS remarkable volume is the first of three parts of a projected work which in its complete form will present a more comprehensive treatment of its subject than has yet been offered to English readers. The aim of the writer is to weave together the various threads of a very complex period of European life, and to set the art and literature of Italy on that background of general social and historical conditions to which they belong, and apart from which they cannot really be understood, according to the received and well-known belief of most modern writers. Mr. Symonds brings to this task the

results of wide, varied, and often curious reading, which he has by no means allowed to overburden his work, and also a familiar knowledge, attested by his former eloquent volume of *Studies on the Greek Poets*, of that classical world to which the Renaissance was confessedly in some degree a return.

It is that background of general history, a background upon which the artists and men of letters are moving figures not to be wholly detached from it, that this volume presents. By the "Age of the Despots" in Italian history the writer understands the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as the twelfth and the thirteenth are the "Age of the Free Burghs," and the sixteenth and seventeenth the "Age of Foreign Enslavement." The chief phenomenon with which the "Age of the Despots" is occupied is that "free emergence of personal passions, personal aims," which all its peculiar conditions tended to encourage, of personalities all alike so energetic and free, though otherwise so unlike as Francesco Sforza, Savonarola, Machiavelli, and Alexander VI., all "despots" in their way. Benvenuto Cellini and Cesare Borgia are seen to be products of the same

general conditions as the "good Duke of Urbino" and Savonarola. Such a book necessarily presents strong lights and shades. The first chapter groups together some wide generalisations on the subject of the work as a whole, on the Renaissance as an "emancipation," which, though perhaps not wholly novel, are very strikingly put, and through the whole of which we feel the breath of an ardent love of liberty. In the next two chapters the writer discusses the age of the earlier despots, the founders of the great princely families, going over ground well traversed indeed, but with a freshness of interest which is the mark of original assimilation, with some parallels and contrasts between Italy and ancient Greece, and led always by the light of modern ideas. One by one all those highly-coloured pieces of humanity are displayed before us, those stories which have made Italian history the fountain-head of tragic motives, all the hard, bright, fiery things, the colour of which M. Taine has in some degree caught in his writings on the philosophy of Italian art, and still more completely Stendhal, in his essay on Italian art and his *Chroniques Italiennes*. You

can hardly open Mr. Symonds's volume without lighting on some incident or trait of character in which man's elementary power to be, to think, to do, shows forth emphatically, and the writer has not chosen to soften down these characteristics; there is even noticeable a certain cynicism in his attitude towards his subject, expressed well enough in the words which he quotes from Machiavelli as the motto of his title-page: *Di questi adunque oziosi principi, e di queste vilissime armi, sarà piena la mia istoria.*

That sense of the complex interdependence on each other of all historical conditions is one of the guiding lights of the modern historical method, and Mr. Symonds abundantly shows how thoroughly he has mastered this idea. And yet on the same background, out of the same general conditions, products emerge, the unlikeness of which is the chief thing to be noticed. The spirit of the Renaissance proper, of the Renaissance as a humanistic movement, on which it may be said this volume does not profess to touch, is as unlike the spirit of Alexander VI. as it is unlike that of Savonarola. Alexander VI.

has more in common with Ezzelino da Romano, that fanatical hater of human life in the middle age, than with Tasso or Lionardo. The Renaissance is an assertion of liberty indeed, but of liberty to see and feel those things the seeing and feeling of which generate not the "barbarous ferocity of temper, the savage and coarse tastes" of the Renaissance Popes, but a sympathy with life everywhere, even in its weakest and most frail manifestations. Sympathy, appreciation, a sense of latent claims in things which even ordinary good men pass rudely by — these on the whole are the characteristic traits of its artists, though it may be still true that "æsthetic propriety, rather than strict conceptions of duty, ruled the conduct even of the best;" and at least they never "destroyed pity in their souls." Such softer touches Mr. Symonds gives us in the "good duke Frederic of Urbino," his real courtesy and height of character, though under many difficulties; in his admirable criticisms on the *Cortegiano* of Castiglione; and again in his account of Agnolo Pandolfini's *Treatise on the Family*, the charm of which has by no means evaporated in Mr. Symonds's analysis;

above all, in the beautiful description, in the seventh chapter, of the last days of Pietro Boscoli the tyrannicide, a striking instance of "the combination of deeply-rooted and almost infantine piety with antique heroism," coming near as it happened, in his friend Luca della Robbia the younger, to an artist who could understand the æsthetic value of the incidents he has related.

I quote a very different episode as a specimen of Mr. Symonds's style:—

"There is a story told by Infessura which illustrates the temper of the times with singular felicity. On April 18, 1485, a report circulated in Rome that some Lombard workmen had discovered a Roman sarcophagus while digging on the Appian Way. It was a marble tomb, engraved with the inscription, 'Julia, daughter of Claudius,' and inside the coffin lay the body of a most beautiful girl of fifteen years, preserved by precious unguents from corruption and the injury of time. The bloom of youth was still upon her cheeks and lips; her eyes and mouth were half open, her long hair floated round her shoulders. She was instantly removed, so goes the legend, to the Capitol; and then began a procession of pilgrims from all the quarters of Rome to gaze upon this saint of the old Pagan world. In the eyes of those enthusiastic worshippers her beauty was beyond imagination or description; she was far fairer than any woman of the modern age could hope to be. At last Innocent VIII.

feared lest the orthodox faith should suffer by this new cult of a heathen corpse. Julia was buried, secretly and at night by his direction, and naught remained in the Capitol but her empty marble coffin. The tale, as told by Infessura, is repeated in Matarazzo and in Nantiporto with slight variations. One says that the girl's hair was yellow, another that it was of the glossiest black. What foundation for the legend may really have existed need not here be questioned. Let us rather use the mythus as a parable of the ecstatic devotion which prompted the men of that age to discover a form of unimaginable beauty in the tomb of the classic world."

The book then presents a brilliant picture of its subject, of the movements of these energetic personalities, the magnificent restlessness and changefulness of their lives, their immense cynicism. As is the writer's subject so is his style — energetic, flexible, eloquent, full of various illustration, keeping the attention of the reader always on the alert. Yet perhaps the best chapter in the book, the best because the most sympathetic, is one of the quieter ones, that on "The Florentine Historians;" their great studies, their anticipations of the historical spirit of modern times, their noble style, their pious humour of discipleship towards Aristotle, Cicero, Tacitus, not without

a certain pedantry becoming enough in the historians of those republics which were after all "products of constructive skill" rather than of a true political evolution — all this is drawn with a clear hand and a high degree of reflectiveness. The chapter on "The Prince" corrects some common mistakes concerning Machiavelli, who is perhaps less of a puzzle than has sometimes been supposed, a patriot devising a desperate means of establishing permanent rule in Florence, designing, in the spirit of a political idealism not more ruthless than that of Plato's Republic, to cure a real evil, a fault not unlike that of ancient Athens itself, the constant exaggerated appetite for change in public institutions, bringing with it an incorrigible tendency of all the parts of human life to fly from the centre, a fault, as it happened in both cases, at last become incurable. The chapter on Savonarola is a bold and complete portrait, with an interesting pendant on "Religious Revivals in Mediæval Italy;" and the last chapter on "Charles the Eighth in Italy" has some real light in it, making things lie more intelligibly apart and together in that tangle of events. The imagi-

nation in historical composition works most legitimately when it approaches dramatic effects. In this volume there is a high degree of dramatic imagination; here all is objective, and the writer is hardly seen behind his work.

I have noted in the foregoing paragraphs the things which have chiefly impressed and pleased me in reading this book, things which are sure to impress and please hundreds of readers and make it very popular. But there is one thing more which I cannot help noticing before I close. Notwithstanding Mr. Symonds's many good gifts, there is one quality which I think in this book is singularly absent, the quality of reserve, a quality by no means merely negative, and so indispensable to the full effect of all artistic means, whether in art itself, or poetry, or the finer sorts of literature, that in one who possesses gifts for those things its cultivation or acquisition is neither more nor less than loyalty to his subject and his work. I note the absence of this reserve in many turns of expression, in the choice sometimes of detail and metaphor, in the very bulk of the present volume, which yet needs only this one quality, in addition to the writer's

other admirable qualities of conception and execution, to make this first part of his work wholly worthy of his design.

II

M. LEMAÎTRE'S "SERENUS, AND OTHER TALES"

MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER, 1887

M. LEMAÎTRE'S "SERENUS, AND OTHER TALES"

A VOLUME of fiction which, while it possesses something of the power and charm of Gustave Flaubert, takes us through no scenes of cruelty or coarseness, but relies for its interest on the blameless pathos of life, touched in the spirit of a true realism, is worth pointing out to English readers. The volume takes its name from the singular story of Serenus, a Christian martyr, to which are added certain briefer Stories Of The Past And Of To-day. With two slight exceptions, two pieces of peculiarly Parisian humour, which make a harsh contrast with the rest of the book, these stories are as pure and solemn as the pictures of Alphonse Legros. The narrative of Serenus, the patrician martyr, has about it something

which reminds one of those sumptuous Roman basilicas put together out of the marble fragments of older Pagan temples or palaces; and in the shorter pieces the busy French journalist seems to have gone for a sort of mental holiday to quiet convent parlours and whitewashed village churches — places of subdued colour and personages congruous therewith, pleasant, doubtless, to fatigued Parisian eyes. M. Jules Lemaître is before all things an artist, showing in these pieces, the longest of which attains no more than sixty pages, that self-possession and sustained sense of design which anticipates the end in the commencement, and never loses sight of it — that gift of literary structure which lends so monumental an air to even the shortest of Flaubert's pieces. Then, he has Flaubert's sense of compassion and his peculiar interest in certain phases or aspects of religious life; and his art (again like Flaubert's) is a learned art. There is the fruit of much and varied reading and thought in this volume, short as it is, though without a shade of pedantry; and its union of realism, of the force of style which is allied to a genuine realism, with an entire

freedom from the dubious interests of almost all French fiction, gives it a charming freshness of effect.

We propose to say a few words on those shorter pieces first, giving some specimens of M. Lemaître's manner. The hero of La Mère Sainte-Agathe, a very intellectual young Parisian, has formed a somewhat artificial marriage engagement with a guileless orphan-girl at the convent school over which Mother Sainte-Agathe presides. Mother Sainte-Agathe was still young — thirty years, perhaps thirty-five. But years, in the case of "the religious," when they are pretty and live really holy lives, rather embalm them than add to their age. When the young man visits the girl, the Mother presides over their interviews, looking at them with an air of kindness and serenity, with an expression she wore always, in which one seemed to detect the presence of a thought, unique, eternal in its character, ever mingled with the thought of the present hour. One day the girl leads her lover into the convent garden.

"It was a large one, and so neat and prim! — neat and prim as a convent-chapel. An avenue of limes, as

exact in line as a row of tapers, led to a terrace projecting on the Loire, with a pleasing view over the landscape of Touraine. Between its gentle banks, amid scattered groups of rustling poplars, the river spread out like a lake, with little pale-coloured islands tufted with misty beds of osiers, and against the horizon a long, long bridge of delicate arches, silver-grey — all very sweet, with melting outlines in water-colour tints, under a lightsome sky of soft blue."

But the childish lover is shrewd enough to notice that in these visits the real business of conversation (very superior conversation, on M. Renan, for instance) is wholly between the Mother and the clever young man. She writes one day at the end of one of her letters: "Mother Sainte-Agathe tells me that I don't put warmth enough into my letters. Ah! my friend, I have enough of it in my heart nevertheless; only perhaps I am still too little to know how to tell it." The young man does not marry the orphan, and, of course, not the reverend Mother. He thought it well to discontinue his visits to the convent.

"Almost without note of the fact," he says, "I was treating Lydia like a child. Whenever I said anything at all serious it was to Mother Sainte-Agathe I addressed myself.

"They were exquisite, those conversations with the Mother — all the more exquisite because I was then

finishing a volume of criticism and fantasy combined, in which I put the utmost amount of Renanism, Impressionism, and Parisian raillery, in turn or altogether. And it was often after the reading of some perverse book that I took myself to those white interviews. One day at parting, when I kissed Lydia, I saw tears in her eyes. 'You are crying, Lydia: have I hurt you in any way?' She gave me a long, serious look, and the look was no longer that of a mere child. 'Are you quite sure,' she said to me in a low voice, 'that it is still for my sake that you come here?'

"It haunted me through the evening, through the whole night, little Lydia's question. In spite of myself she had revealed to me what was at the bottom of my heart. In effect, I perceived with much distress that for some time past it was for Mother Sainte-Agathe I had come, that that charm of innocence in my betrothed was exhausted. Yes, it was over — well over!

"I did not venture to the convent next day, nor the day after that. Did she look out for me? I never returned there again."

A still more melancholy note is struck in L'Ainée, the story of a beautiful girl, the eldest of eight sisters, who sees them all cheerfully married to the suitors who had begun by paying court to herself. It pained her to see her nephews and nieces, although she loved them much, and spent her days in work for them. And what added to her unhappi-

ness was that every one, in these matters, took her for a *confidante* and adviser, regarding her as a person of extraordinary prudence, superior to human passions. To her the prize never comes. Her languors, her dejected resumptions of life, are told with great feeling and tact, till death comes just in time to save her from the dishonour to which the *ennui* of her days had at last tempted her.

Les Deux Saints presents a curious picture from religious life in a French country village, the not ill-natured irony of which by no means destroys an agreeable sense of calm remoteness from the world in reading it.

"The little village of Champignot-les-Raisins had an aged Curé, an old church, and in the church an ancient image. The image was the image of St. Vincent, patron of vine-dressers. It was of wood, and seemed to have been shaped by the strokes of a hatchet. It had a great belly, a big face frankly painted with vermillion, breathing of gaiety and good-nature — the physiognomy of a vine-dresser at the time of vintage. Pretty it was not. But the Curé and his flock were used to it. The image of the good saint enjoyed the greatest consideration in the parish, and deserved it, for it worked miracles."

The old Curé dies. His youthful successor forces a smart new image on his flock. The

parish is divided between the votaries of the old and the new; and the tiny provincial controversy seems by a certain touch of irony to give the true measure of many greater, perhaps less ingenuous controversies; and for half an hour one has a perfect calm at Champignot-les-Raisins.

M. Lemaître writes for the most part as a pure artist. He writes to please the literary sense: to call into pleasurable exercise a delicately-formed intelligence. In one instance, however, it is to be feared he is writing for a practical purpose. En Nourrice describes the fate of a little child put out to nurse in the country. "He is a beautiful infant," cries the mother at his birth: "he shall be named George. I hope he may be very happy!" Alas! all goes the other way. His foster-brother, the strenuous Fred, wears out the frail stranger's dainty frocks — *la belle robe de Georges*. When the parents make their visits it is Fred who receives the mother's embraces instead of the pining George, sent out of sight for the occasion. In short:

"The little Parisian's destiny had been that terrible, inexplicable destiny of the infants who suffer and cry

for a few months and then die, having understood nothing in it all. One night he had refused to sleep. He had refused the feeding-bottle, and even the breast of Rosalie, the treat allowed him when it was too late. His eyes rolled convulsively: the cheeks were of the colour of earth: the infant was dying. Towards morning, instead of crying, little groanings had escaped him, almost like the complaints of a grown person. At last he had grown quite still and moved no more. His mother was glad to have escaped the sight of that.

"It rained in torrents when she and M. Loisil arrived at the village. The young mother, who had been in tears all the way from Paris, could weep no more, rocking herself in her damp gown, her red eyes under her crape. Early in the morning Rosalie had sent Fred to his grandmother's. She, too, was weeping, — sincerely! if you please.

"Then the mother looked at the little corpse in its cradle of basket-work. George was wearing for the first time his fine frock, dirtied by Fred. He was terribly thin, with cheeks like old wax, the nose dwindled, the eyelids blue, his tiny mouth, pale and partly open, with a little foam at the back, had a touch of violet round the lips.

"'Poor little babe! how he is changed!' said the mother, sobbing. M. Loisil looked at the dead child attentively, but said nothing. A horrible doubt had come to him.

"'Come,' said Rosalie, 'don't look any more. It is too painful.' Then on a sudden enters Totor, holding Fred in his arms, like a great bundle. Rosalie grew pale. Totor explained that grandmother was sick and would not keep them.

"And Fred, with one of George's caps on his head and one of George's sashes round his waist, in George's white shoes, bursting with health, good-tempered, and moving skittishly in the arms of Totor, began smiling at the lady and gentleman.

"The carpenter came, then the Curé, with a choir-boy spattered with mud, carrying an old tarnished cross which tottered on its pole.

"They are sickening, those funerals of Parisian nurslings one sees sometimes crossing an empty village-street, leading, behind a coffin of the size of a violin-case, a lady and gentleman in mourning, who pass by, dabbing their eyes, while the labourers regard them curiously from the barn-doors (it happened in La Beauce) on the way to leave a bit of their own hearts in some corner of a forgotten cemetery. As the first shovel of earth fell, Madame Loisil, who had forgotten in her illness that one first kiss she had given to George, cried out, 'Ah! my poor babe, you will never have a kiss from me alive!'"

Of the Tales Of Other Days, two — Boun and Les Funérailles de Firdousi — are Oriental pieces, apologues, full of that mellow and tranquil wisdom which becomes the East. We profess to be no great lovers of an Oriental setting. A world from which mediæval and modern experience must, from the nature of the case, be excluded, makes on our minds an impression too vague for really artistic effect. The intimacies, the minute and concrete

expression of the pathos of life, are apt to be wanting in compositions after the manner of Rasselas. But it is just that element — the refinement of wisdom, the refinement of justice, an exquisite compassion and mercy in the taking of life — which the reader may look for in the charming story of Boun.

Les Deux Fleurs is another Story Of Other Days, reminding us somewhat of Flaubert's St. Julien l'Hospitalier. Its aim is, again, that of an apologue, impressing the characteristically French moral that, "in the regard of Heaven, charity is of equal value with chastity. It is best to have both if one can. Let him who lacks the second, try at all events to attain the first. Amen!" As a picture from the Middle Ages it possesses a reality of impression not often found amid mediæval sceneries — an impression much enhanced by the gently satiric effect of the half-sceptical chaplain (a figure worthy of Chaucer), who accompanies the hero to the Crusades. Already in the Middle Ages, as he goes decorously on his way, he can divert himself in a curious observation of the ideas, the deportment of others.

"Simon Godard, mounted on his old mule, rode usually side by side with the knight-errant his master, whose candour of spirit he loved; and oftentimes they conversed together to while away the length of the journey. 'Shall we be soon in Palestine?' Sir Oy de Hautecœur asked him one day, being no great clerk in matters of geography. 'About a month hence we shall be getting near it, if no accident happens,' answered the chaplain. 'But only one-half of our number will be left when we arrive. In the East large numbers die of want, of fatigue, of malignant fevers. I don't know whether you perceive it, lost in dreaming as you always are, but we leave behind us many of our companions; and as there is no time to dig their graves, the dogs and the crows provide them another sort of sepulture.'

"'I don't pity those,' said the knight-errant, 'who go before us to Paradise. The body is but a prison: its substance vile; and it matters little what becomes of it.'

"'Sire, there are moments when for my part I fail to distinguish clearly the prison from the prisoner. It grieves me that so many of us die. And I don't see precisely what good end is served by their deaths. We are spending a year and more on the work of taking two or three towns, and when the day of conquest comes we shall be but a handful of men.'

"'True! But the walls of Jericho did not fall till the seventh day, and this is not yet the seventh crusade.'

"'But is it really necessary that Christians should possess the sepulchre of the Lord, which, after all, is an empty sepulchre, and which He suffers to remain for a thousand years in the hands of infidels? And don't you think that the soil of their country belongs

to them, as lawfully as the soil of France to Frenchmen?'

"'Talk not thus, Master Chaplain: such railleries ill become a Churchman and a holy man like yourself.'

"'I am not joking, sire! But the will of Heaven does not appear to me so manifestly as it appears to you. It irks me to think that Heaven has given to its worst enemies a wiser industry than ours, and better engines of war, and the victory over its faithful servants.'

"'Are you unaware then that their riches come from the devil and serve only to maintain them in their abominable manners? If Heaven permits them to overcome us from time to time, that is because it tries those whom it loves, because trials purify and lift us to itself.'

"'Sire! you would make an excellent theologian and I but an indifferent knight. But if by good fortune I were a *seigneur* in the land of France, I think I should seldom leave it. While the *seigneurs* go afar to get killed, the stay-at homes fall behind with their dues. The *bourgeois* in the towns add pound to pound, and as the *seigneurs* want money for their distant expeditions, get by purchase all sorts of liberties. I don't complain of that, being of the people myself. But what I say is, that a nobleman who takes the Cross is greatly taken in.'

"'I am aware, Master Chaplain, that you are not uttering your true thoughts, and that all this is meant to try me. I am not troubled because other Christians endeavour to improve their low and hard condition. For myself, I am neither a draper nor a grocer that I should remain always in my hole, taking no thought

except for money and bodily gratification. I am in quest of what is of higher price. I am made of different paste from your *bourgeois* and your serfs. I should scarce be able to remain long in any one place, or limit my happiness to the things one can see and touch. I love the Demoiselle de Blanc-Lys, and I leave her not knowing whether I shall return. I go to make my trial in an adventure which you declare foolish and useless, and of which certainly I shall have no profit even if I succeed. And wherefore? — I know not. Only I can do no otherwise. And I have a sense that it is pleasing to God and that I am a workman of His.'

"Master Simon Godard could only answer, 'Amen!'"

On the whole, Pauvre Ame is the most characteristic of M. Lemaître's shorter stories. We think the English reader will forgive some copious extracts.

"If one must needs feel pity for all people's sorrows, the life and heart of an honest man would not suffice. One would begin by lamenting the violent and tragic griefs which force themselves into view. And then those other sorrows, the sorrows which are modest, which hide themselves under a veil of sweetness and seeming serenity. There are destinies stifled and silent, where the pain is so secret and so equable in its continuance, and makes so little sound, that no one thinks of commiseration. Yet nothing is more worthy of pity than those unquiet and solitary hearts, which have yearned to give themselves and no one has cared to take, which have lavished their treasures unheeded and without fruit, and which death at last carries away,

outwardly intact, but torn within, because they preyed upon themselves."

Mademoiselle de Mérisols, then, one of those quiet souls whose fortunes M. Lemaître loves to trace, inhabited in an old street of convents a small set of apartments, with melancholy old furniture she had been able to keep from what had belonged to her parents. The happiest hours of her life were at the Sunday mass and vespers. She would have been pretty could she have felt gay. She loves and is disappointed; but she bravely resumes once more her life of hard work as a teacher, putting her from time to time in contact with home scenes which only bring the closer to herself her sense of isolation in the world. Love comes at last, but in that ironic mood which seems to be one of M. Lemaître's fixed ideas of the spirit of human life. She was thirty-five. The excellent M. de Maucroix was twenty years older. But she felt afraid of eternal solitude. She had hopes of a child, but it never came. For eight years she was her husband's nurse. She closed his eyes and shed tears for him. She found herself rich. Only once again the poor soul was alone in

the world. She busied herself in good works, but felt an immense weariness. What she needed was some one she might love singly and with all her force. Then follows one of those curious episodes only possible in Roman Catholic France, and the writer finds his opportunity for a striking clerical portrait.

"Madame de Maucroix was in the habit of attending the Sunday Offices at the chapel of the Dominicans. It was warmer, sweeter, more intimate, than in the churches. Many women of fashion repaired thither, rustling softly as in a drawing-room.

"One great festival a monk preached — thirty years of age, handsome, slender, with a superb pallor. He talked much of love and human affections. He quoted Plato, Virgil, Lamartine. He preached on doubt, and was still more modern. He quoted contemporaries — Jouffroy, Leopardi, Heine, De Musset. He described the anguish of a mind which does not believe; and some of his touches would have been equally appropriate to the picture of a heart in anguish because it does not love. Father Montarcy was one of those generous hearts with a superficial mind often to be found in the order of St. Dominic. He had all the beautiful illusions of Lacordaire, and united to them some pretensions to science. He was one of those monks who have read Darwin and attend the physiological courses at the Sorbonne. His style of speaking was vague and inflated, but with flights of real beauty. He moved along, involved in his dream, isolated from what is real, body and soul alike draped in white —

draped with much skill. He was profoundly chaste, but felt his power over women, taking pleasure in it in spite of himself, lending himself to their adoration.

"He became the director of Madame de Maucroix. She told him the story of her life and confided to him the void in her heart. What was she to do to fill that void? And every time she called him Father bethought herself that he might have been her son.

"With a fine stroke of policy, moved also by the poor woman's desolation, and responding to his own secret desire, he observed gravely: 'My daughter, it is I who should call you mother, and you should call me son. I am young, and I feel how feeble I should be without that special aid which Heaven accords to its priests. I may believe that you have acquired by a life of virtue an illumination equal to that conferred by the holy oil of the priesthood. Will you be my mother and director?' And he, in his turn, confessed himself to Madame de Maucroix."

She had a son, then! Her life became a charming one. Every morning she assisted at his mass. She busied herself, precisely as a mother might have done, with his wardrobe and his linen. She accompanied him to the various towns to which he went to preach, and listened with delight to all his sermons. She seeks to know the family history of Father Montarcy, and hearing that he was an orphan feels her joy renewed. He was the son of a working-man, like the Saviour, like many who

have become powerful in this world. She does but admire him the more. He had but one sister, devout, insignificant enough, a dressmaker in a country town. Madame de Maucroix provided a dowry and got her well married. She feels proud to have a hand in all the affairs of the convent, in going thither with perfect freedom, receiving from the fathers as she passes ceremonious smiles and greetings, as if in recognition of her right. Often she would call to mind the great Christian women of the early Church, Paula, Monica. It was fascinating to play the part of a Mother of the Church. What Madame Swetchine had been for Lacordaire, it was her dream to be for Father Montarcy.

Only she carried the part of director a little too far. A kind of jealousy — jealousy of penitents younger, and with other charms than hers — mingles with her devotion.

"'Pardon my freedom,' she says one day, 'but it is dangerous for a man of your age to listen for hours to the confessions of young women made after the manner of the one who has just left you.'

"It was like a blow in the face. The young monk raised himself in all the pride of his priesthood, pride of a man chaste and sure of himself, with the rudeness

of a monk contemptuous of women. The chapel was empty. He darted out of the confessional, and with a terrible voice, a magnificent tragic movement of his great sleeves, exclaimed: 'Madame de Maucroix! Understand! I forbid you to intrude into my life as a priest and interfere in matters which concern Heaven and myself alone.' And he quitted the chapel with majestic step.

"Madame de Maucroix sank upon the pavement. Next day, broken down with grief and quite prepared to humiliate herself, she returned to the convent. The porter informed her that Father Montarcy was absent. The Prior, whom she asked to see, announced in freezing tones that he was departed for the Tyrol, where he purposed to spend some months in a convent recently founded. She understood that all was over. She possessed in Sologne a little old country-house, and thither she took refuge. There she lived for a year amid the melancholy of the pinewoods, of the violet heaths and motionless meres stained with blood at sunset, passing her days in the practice of a minute and mechanical devotion, sleepily plucking the beads of her rosary, chilled, without thoughts, with tearless eyes. In truth, she was dying day by day of an affection of the liver, aggravated suddenly by her recent emotions. When she saw that her end was near, she begged the sister who nursed her to write to Father Montarcy that she was going to die. Actually she died next day, and the Father's answer came too late. It was wanting in simplicity, though perhaps not in sincerity: 'My mother! my mother! all is forgotten. Ah! often have I wept in the presence of Heaven,' &c., &c. It was signed, 'Your son.'

"The good sister, who received the letter, thought she might open it, and felt somewhat surprised and scandalised."

The peculiar sense of irony which is the closing effect of every one of these shorter pieces is also the prevailing note of Serenus — that more lengthy and weighty narrative, which gives name to the whole volume. It embodies the imaginary confession of a supposed Christian martyr, who was not in reality a Christian at all, who had in truth died by his own hand.

At daybreak, on a morning of March, A. D. 90, a group of Christians has come to the Mamertine prison to receive the bodies of certain criminals condemned to death.

"It was cold: small rain was falling: towards the east the sky was tinged with an impure and ghastly yellow. The Eternal City, emerging from the shadows of night, unrolled around the Capitol its grey billows of houses, like a dirty sea after a storm. Certain ponderous monuments rose above the rest here and there. Their wet roofs shone feebly in the dawn."

"Let us pray for our brothers!" says an aged priest in the company; and at that moment the magistrates entrusted with the execution of capital sentences emerge from the prison. The Christians enter. The head

and trunk of the grey-haired consular, Flavius Clemens, are lying there. A patch of blood glistens on the ground beside him. One of the Christians dips in it the corner of a white linen cloth, which he folds carefully and hides within his tunic. In the next cell lay the corpse of a man still young. He seemed to have died a natural death. Even in death his fine but enigmatic features wore an air of irony and pride. "The body of Marcus Annæus Serenus!" cries the gaoler. "He was found dead this morning. The triumvirs thought it not worth while to decapitate a dead body. It is thought he died of poison." The rude face of the aged priest contracted suddenly with a look of surprise, of pain and indignation.

Through the midst of the contemptuous bystanders the bodies are reverently borne away along the Appian Way, well described by M. Lemaître, to a vast subterranean chamber, the tomb of Flavius Clemens, where the priest Timotheus remains alone for a time with the sacred remains. As he gazes on the face of Serenus with a look "keen and persistent, as if he would have fathomed to its depths the mysterious soul which dwelt no longer in that

elegant form," his hand rests for a moment on the bosom of the corpse. He feels something below the silken tunic — a roll of parchment. He recognises the handwriting of Serenus. But the characters are small and fine, impossible to read in that feeble light. Hardly pausing to cover the pale face, he hastens from the sepulchre, and returns with the manuscript to his sordid lodging in Rome. Here he draws forth and reads with eagerness the confessions of Serenus.

"It is folly perhaps to undertake this confession. Either it will not be read, or it will distress those who read it. Still, it may be, that in recounting my story to myself for the last time, I shall justify myself in my own eyes. Some worthy souls have loved me, but none have really known me. Now, though for a long time past it has been my pride to live in myself, to be impenetrable to every one beside, my secret weighs upon me to-day. A certain regret comes to me (it is almost remorse) that I have played so successfully the singular part which circumstances and my own curiosity have imposed upon me; and I should wish, by way of persuading myself that I could not have acted otherwise, to take up the entire chain of my thoughts and actions from my earliest days to the day on which I am to die."

It is a charming figure, certainly, which Serenus displays, rich with intellectual endow-

ments, and a heart that, amid all the opportunities for corruption which could beset a fortunate patrician in the days of Domitian, never loses its purity to the last — affectionate, reflective, impressible by pity, with "the gift of tears." And here is one of his earliest experiences.

"I was twelve years old when the great fire destroyed one-half of Rome and threw more than a hundred thousand people on the pavements. During two or three years, in spite of the enormous distributions of money and bread ordered by the emperor, the misery in Rome was fearful. The spectacle of so much undeserved suffering wounded my heart incurably. I conceived a lively notion of the injustice of things and the absurdity of men's destinies. I found it unjust that my father should be the possessor of five hundred slaves while so many poor people were dying of hunger. I gave away all the money I could dispose of. But, with the stiff logic of my age, I considered that no thanks were due to me, and avoided people's effusive thanks, the coarseness of which shocked the fine taste of my aristocratic youth. One day my tutor took me to a grand festival which Nero gave to the people in his gardens. To divert the anger of the populace, which accused him of being the author of the conflagration, he had caused some hundreds of Christians to be arrested. The majority of them had been thrown to the beasts in the circus: others, arrayed in sacks steeped in resin, were attached to tall stakes at intervals along the broad pathways. At nightfall fire

was applied to them. The crowds pressed with loud vociferations around the living torches. The flame which enveloped the culprits, hollowed by the wind from time to time, allowed the horrible faces to be seen, with great open mouths, though one could not hear the cries. A stench of burnt flesh filled the air. I had a nervous attack and was carried home half dead. The shock had been too great; and although at that age the most painful impressions are quickly effaced, something of it remained with me — a languor of spirits at certain moments, a melancholy, an indolence of pulse, rare in a child."

This was on one side: on the other were the varied intellectual interests offered to a reflective mind in that curious, highly educated, wistful age. In a few effective but sparing traits Serenus depicts his intellectual course, through the noble dreams of a chaste Stoicism, through the exquisite material voluptuousness of Epicureanism when the natural reaction had come, until, having exhausted experience, as he fancies, he proposes to die.

It was an age in which people had carried the art of enjoyment to its height.

"Never before, I think, has the world seen, never again will it see, so small a number of persons absorb and occupy for their own uses so large a number of human lives. Some of my friends had as many as three thousand slaves, and hardly knew the real extent

of their riches. And the science of pleasure was on a level with the resources at its disposition. Many successive generations of a privileged class had made a study of the means of refining, varying, multiplying, agreeable sensations. Posterity, assuredly, will hardly conceive the kind of life which some of us have known and practised. But as the future will not easily imagine the intensity of our physical pleasures, perhaps it will even less understand the depth of our satiety. It will be surprised, in reading our chronicles, at the number of those who in this age have committed suicide. After fifteen years of a revel, refined and coarse by turns, my body exhausted, my senses dulled, my heart void to the bottom of all belief, and even of illusion, what was I to do in the world? It figured to me as a ridiculous spectacle, and interested me no longer. I had retained that native sweetness of temper which came to me from my father, but only because I found it pleasant to be kind; and even that too was come to be indifferent to me. For the rest, public employments had become sordid things of purchase, and I loathed every form of activity. I languished in an immense, an incurable *ennui*, and having no further motive to live, I wished to die. Death had no fears for me. It was the great deliverer. Only, I desired to die without suffering."

The would-be suicide is saved from death by the intervention, at the last moment, of his sister, the youthful Serena, in the retired life of a young orphan girl scarcely known by him hitherto; and her subsequent devotion during the long illness which follows touches him

deeply. In reality her devotion is due in part to a motive higher than natural sisterly devotion. On the part of Serenus also, there was something deeper than merely fraternal affection.

"It was love of a peculiar kind, such as I had never before experienced in the faintest degree. Serena was so different from all the women I had ever known. It seemed to me that that love evoked from the depths of my past life and brought to new birth within me what had been lost in my earlier days, those ardours of the youthful sage aspiring towards an absolute purity. Then, in proportion as I recovered my mental vigour, my old curiosity returned; and little by little I introduced into this ardent affection for my sister, the attentive mood of an observer, attracted by the spectacle of an extraordinary soul.

"One day Serena said to me, 'Will you give me a great pleasure? Come with me to-morrow morning where I shall take you.'

"'I will go where you will, Serena.'"

Serena takes him to see the ceremonies of the Eucharist in a Christian oratory.

"I perceived among the company assembled the consul of that year, Flavius Clemens — a circumstance which explained the fact that this meeting took place in one of the burial places of his family. I recognised the wife of Clemens and his niece, and Paulina, the widow of Seneca, pale for ever from having followed her husband more than half way on the road to death.

They were deeply veiled. At last I saw in the front rank Acte, the former mistress of Nero, the former friend of my father, still beautiful in spite of her fifty years, but with a little of the cosmetic art, methinks. The rest of the company appeared to be composed of poor people and slaves."

To Serenus the company, the office for which it was assembled, seemed grave, majestic, touching, and something altogether new. But he perceives also, clearly enough, once for all, that for him these rites will never be more than a spectacle, that there is a gulf between these people and himself.

"'My dear Serenus,' said my sister, as we departed, 'You have now seen what the Christians are. You will love them more and more in proportion as you come to know them. You are unhappy, as I well know. You must become a Christian. The Truth is there. There, also, is the secret of consolation.'

"'I will think of it, Serena.'"

In fact, he takes pains to inform himself on the matter, interested at finding many a familiar thought of ancient Pagan wisdom in a new setting. Yes! —

"All the virtues which the Pagan philosophers had already known and preached seemed to me among the disciples of Christ to have been transformed by a sentiment absolutely new — a love of a God who was man, a God crucified — a love burning, full of sensibility,

of tears, of confidence, of hope. Clearly, neither the personification of the forces of nature, nor the abstract deity of the Stoics, had ever inspired anything like this. And this love of God, the origin of, and first step towards, all other Christian virtues, communicated to them a purity and sweetness, an unction, and, as it were, a perfume, such as I had never breathed before."

Yet with all his heartfelt admiration for believers, Serenus is still unable to believe. Like a creature of the nineteenth century, he finds the world absolutely subject to the reign of physical law. And then there were difficulties of another sort, of which he became sensible now and again.

"The idea which my new brethren entertained of the world about us, and of our life here, jarred upon I know not what sentiment of nature within me. In spite of my own persistent pessimism, I was displeased that men should so despise the only mode of life, after all, of which we are certain. I found them, moreover, far too simple-minded, closed against all artistic impressions, limited, inelegant. Or, perhaps, a certain anxiety awaking in me, I feared for the mischief which might be caused to the empire by a conception of life such as that, if it continued to spread — a detachment such as theirs from all civil duties, all profane occupations. Sometimes I was decidedly unjust to them. The religious after-thought which the Christians mingled with their affections, by way of purifying them, seemed to me to chill those affections, in depriving them of their natural liberty, their grace, their spontaneity. To

be loved only as redeemed by Christ, and in regard of my eternal salvation, made my heart cold. And then it shocked me that these saintly people should feel so sure of so many things, and things so wonderful, while I, for my part, had searched so carefully without finding, had doubted so much in my life, and finally made a pride of my unbelief."

But, inconsistently enough, he is offended at times by the survival of many a human weakness among the believers. The consul Clemens, among those brothers who were all equal before Heaven, was treated with marked consideration, and welcomed it. Slaves were still slaves. The women were rivals for the special attention of the priests. Acte, once the mistress of Nero, somewhat exaggerated her piety, and still retained also many of her former artificial manners.

"In spite of those little weaknesses, what good, what beautiful souls, I came across there! In vain I said to myself, these holy persons are making a bargain; they reckon on Paradise; it is in view of a reward that they practise the most sublime virtues. But to believe at all in that distant far-off recompense, is not this too itself an act of virtue, since it involves belief in the justice of God, and a conception of Him, as being that which He ought to be?"

And noting sometimes the ardent quality of their faith and its appropriateness to human

needs, the needs especially of the poor and suffering, Serenus could not but feel that the future would be with them. If the empire failed, the religion of Christ would flourish on its ruins. Then, what sort of a thing would that new humanity be? More virtuous, doubtless, and therefore happier, since happiness comes of the soul; on the other hand, he thinks (mistakenly, as we know, looking backwards on the length and breadth of Christian history) with less art, and less elegance of soul, a feebler understanding of the beautiful.

Presently, a certain change takes place in the life of the Christian community. The influence of Calixtus, a priest of the sweeter and more lenient type, is superseded by that of Timotheus, lately returned to Rome — a man sincerely good, but narrow-minded and rigorous in his zeal. He would have Serenus receive baptism, or depart entirely from the church. It takes Serenus some time to explain away his scruples regarding what seems at first sight an act of hypocrisy. And then the trial comes. Partly on the ground of their religious belief, mainly for an affront to the Emperor, the chief members of the community

are arrested. Serenus has said adieu to his sister. He is in prison, awaiting his end.

"My gaoler is a good-natured fellow. I had about me the means of writing, and he has procured me a lamp. He informs me that the executioner will come about the hour of daybreak. I have been writing all the night. My last link to life is broken; and death, be it annihilation, be it the passage to a world unknown, has no terrors for me. I have replaced myself almost exactly in the state of mind in which I was last year, when I determined to die in my bath. But at this last moment a dread has come upon me for a death which soils and disfigures: I fear the stroke of the axe, which may fail in its aim. In my time the science of poisons has reached a high perfection, and the hollow pearl in my ring contains a colourless drop of liquid which will destroy me in a few minutes, almost without pain. I have seen the honours Christians pay to the burial-place wherein rest the remains of the victims of Nero. They will honour me also as one of their saints. Can I, at this late hour, undeceive them? But for what purpose? I am willing they should guess the fact of my suicide, that they should read my confession; yet I will do nothing to that end; for if Serena knew how I died, in what condition of unbelief, her grief would be too great for her. For the rest, I have good hope that Timotheus, who has no love for me, will allow only a limited form of reverence to be paid to my bones; and if some simple hearts revere me more than I deserve, again what does it matter? It is their faith will be reckoned to them, not the merits of the saint they will invoke. And then, after all, it is not a bad

man whose memory they will honour. I have sincerely sought for truth. I forced myself in youth to attain to sanctity as I conceived it. And if I have been indolent, weak, voluptuous — if I have done little for other people — at least I have always had great indulgence for them, a great pity."

The austere Timotheus, full of suspicion, pored for hours over the manuscript, which was clear enough at the beginning. But the scholarly Latin of the young patrician was not always intelligible to him, towards the end the handwriting became confused, and he remained still in doubt regarding the precise character of the death of Serenus. He might have confided the confession to a more expert reader; but, though profoundly curious on the matter, he feared a possible scandal. More than suspicious, he would fain allow Serenus the benefit of such doubt as remained. If he had not died for Christ, at least he had been condemned because of Him; and, perhaps, even at the last moment, some sudden illumination, some gleam of faith had come to him. For a moment he thought of burning the manuscript; but a certain sense of respect for the dead restrained him. He replaced the manuscript in a fold of the tunic: "Let his

sin, or his innocence, remain with him. God! who judgest the heart, I recommend my brother to your goodness!"

It is about eight hundred years later that we find Serenus again — Marcus Annæus Serenus, by the designation of his tombstone in the catacombs, — as Saint Marc le Romain, at Beaugency-sur-Loire, whither his precious relics have been brought from Rome by the Abbot Angelran. Among those relics the Abbot had discovered the manuscript, and confided it, still intact, to the most learned member of the Benedictine community over which he presided. With him those old doubts of Timotheus became certainty. With much labour he deciphers the writing, and discovers that the supposed martyr had died a Pagan.

But Saint Marc the Roman had already become popular, and worked miracles. The learned monk was unwilling to trouble the minds of the faithful, to gratify, moreover, the monks of a rival house. Still, he lacked the courage to destroy a document so singular, and hid the manuscript in a corner of the monastic library. It passed we are told, in 1793, into the public library of Beaugency,

where it was found and read by our author. The reputation of Saint Marc the Roman maintained itself till far onwards in the Middle Ages. His miracles, like himself of old, were always considerate, always full of "indulgence."

The same sort of irony, then, makes itself felt, as the final impression of the history of Serenus — the same sort of irony as that which shaped the fortunes of M. Lemaître's other characters — the worthiest of all the sisters, who fails to get married: the mother who embraces the wrong infant: Boun, with her gift of the fairy's ring, whose last, best miracle of assistance is but to restore her again to the simplicity of mind and body in which it had found her. "She has this irony — Dame Nature!"—and in the recognition of it, supplemented by a keen sense of what should be the complementary disposition on man's part, is the nearest approach which our author makes to a philosophy of life. Nature, circumstance, is far from pitiful, abounds in mockeries, in baffling surprises and misadventures, like a cynical person amused with the distresses of children. Over against that cynical humour, it may be our part to promote

in life the mood of the kindly person, still regarding people very much as children, but, like Serenus, with "a great pity for them, a great indulgence."

M. Lemaître has many and varied interests, a marked individuality of his own amid them all, and great literary accomplishments. His success in the present volume might well encourage him to undertake a work of larger scope, — to add to his other excellent gifts, in the prolonged treatment of some one of those many interests, that great literary gift of patience.

III

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE, AUGUST 25, 1888

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT [1]

PROSE as a fine art, of which French literature affords a continuous illustration, had in Gustave Flaubert a follower, unique in the decisiveness of his conception of that art and the disinterestedness of his service to it. Necessitated by weak health to the regularity and the quiet of a monk, he was but kept the closer to what he had early recognised as his vocation in life. By taking care, he lived to be almost sixty years old, in the full use of his gift, as we may suppose, and he wrote seven or eight books, none of them lengthy. "Neglect nothing," he writes to a friend. "Labour! Do the thing over again, and don't leave your work till you feel convinced you have brought it to

[1] "Correspondance — Première Série — 1830–1850." (Paris.)

the last point of perfection possible for you. In these days genius is not rare. But what no one has now, what we should try to have, is the conscience of one's work." To that view he was faithful; and he had, and keeps, his reward. So sparing as a writer of books, he was a voluminous letter-writer. A volume of his letters to George Sand appeared in 1883. In 1887 his niece, for many years his intimate companion, published the first portion of his general correspondence, and it is the purpose of this paper to note some of the lights thrown by it on himself and on his work.

Gustave Flaubert was born at Rouen in 1821. His earliest home was in the old Maison-Dieu, of which his father was surgeon. The surgeon's household was self-respecting, affectionate, refined, liberal in expense; but the inevitable associations of the place — the suffering, white-capped faces at the windows — stayed by the susceptible lad, and passed into his work as a somewhat overbalanced sense of unhappiness in things. More cheerful influences came with the purchase of a country house at Croisset, a few miles down the Seine, on the right bank, "white, and in

the old style." In after years Flaubert delighted to believe that Pascal, that great master of prose, had once visited it. It was here, in the large rooms, the delightful garden, with views of Rouen, the busy river, the wooded hills, that the remainder of Flaubert's life was chiefly spent. His letters show that the feeling of vocation to literature came early; oddly enough, for he was no precocious child, and took a longer time than is usual in learning to read. From the first he was abundant in enthusiasm for the literary art of others. In early youth he meets Victor Hugo, and is surprised to find him much like any one else externally, wondering at "the greatness of the treasure contained in so ordinary a casket," fixing his eyes devoutly "on the right hand which had written so many beautiful things." He was a singularly beautiful child, and records that royal ladies had stopped their carriages to take him in their arms and kiss him. By its vigour and beauty, again, his youth made people think of the young demigods of Greek sculpture. Then, somewhere in early manhood, came an alarm regarding health, both bodily and mental; and from that time to his death he continued more or less of

an invalid, or at least a valetudinarian, enjoying life, indeed, its work, his gift, but always with an undercurrent of nervous distress, "To practical life," he writes at twenty-four, "I have said an irrevocable adieu. Hence, for a long time to come, all I ask is five or six hours of quiet in my own room daily, a big fire in the winter, and two candles every evening to give me light": again, "I am well enough, now that I have consented to be always ill": and again, "My life seems arranged now after a regular plan with less large, less varied horizons, but the deeper perhaps, because more restrained. You would not believe what mischief any sort of derangement causes me." Henceforth a sort of sacerdotal order is impressed everywhere. In the quiet house his writing-table is before him, reverently covered with all its apparatus of work, under a light silken cloth, when a visitor is announced: his life slides early into even grooves; an organisation naturally exquisite becomes fastidious. He was still, at carefully-guarded hours, abundant in friendship, in the good-humour, and the humour or wit, which attaches and amuses friends. After all, there was plenty of laugh-

ter, not always satiric, in his life. And then an intimate domestic affection, so largely evidenced in these letters, making heavy demands from time to time on his patience, his self-denial, and procuring him in return immense consideration, was a necessity alike of his personal and his literary life. It is a very human picture, with average battles and sorrows and joys, quite like those of the *bourgeois* he so greatly despised, but for him with all the joys also, all the various intellectual adventure, of the artistic life, followed loyally as an end in itself. The quiet people he quietly loves are a relaxation from the somewhat over-intent character of his "art," while they supply some of its motives. And the enforced monotony of a recluse life is in their favour. "To take pleasure in a place it is necessary to have lived there long. One day is not enough for warming one's nest."

Yet in spite of bad health, in spite of his love of retirement, of routine, his passion for a recluse life, he had been, at least for a Frenchman, a good deal of a traveller. Foreign travel — mental, and as far as might be physical, journeys — to the old classical lands, the

desert, the wondrous East, the very matter of his work was in considerable measure dependent upon that. Rapid yet penetrative notice of the places he visits animates his correspondence. The student of his writings — so brief a list! — is glad to add to them the record of a journey to Brittany in 1847, written in "collaboration" with his travelling companion, M. Maxime du Camp. He visited many parts of France, above all, the grand old Pagan towns of the South, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, "a brave country, still virgin as to the *bourgeois*, who have not yet arrived to degrade it with their admiration, a country ardent and grave, all red and black." At last, with a thousand daily solicitudes for the poor old mother left at Croisset, came his long journey to Syria and Egypt, the record of which fills the last hundred pages of the volume before us.

Flaubert's first great trouble came in his twenty-fifth year, on the death of his father, quickly followed by that of his favourite sister Caroline: —

It was yesterday at eleven o'clock we interred her — poor damsel! They put her in her wedding-gown,

with bunches of roses, violets, and immortelles. I passed the whole night watching beside her. She lay straight, reposed on her couch, in the room where you have heard her play. She looked taller and handsomer than in life, with the long white veil down to the feet. In the morning, when all was ready, I gave her a last kiss in her coffin. I stooped down, placed my head within, felt the lead bend under my hands. — It was I who had the cast taken. I saw the coarse hands handle her and enclose her in the plaster. I shall possess her hand and her face. Pradier will make the bust for me, to be placed in my own room. I have kept for myself her large striped shawl, a lock of her hair, the table, and the desk at which she wrote. And that is all! — all that remains of those one has loved . . . When we got up there, in that cemetery behind the walls of which we used to go out walking in my school days, the grave was too narrow: the coffin would not go in. They shook it, pulled it this way and that, used spade and levers, and at last a gravedigger tramped upon it — where the head was — to force it into its place. I felt dried up — like the marble of a tomb — but terribly irritated. And now, since Sunday, we are at home again at Croisset. What a journey it was! alone with my mother and the infant, which cried. The last time I left, it was with yourself, you will remember. Of the four persons who then lived there two remain. . . . My mother is better than she might be; occupies herself with her daughter's babe, is trying to make herself a mother once more. Will she succeed? The reaction has not yet come, and I dread it. I am crushed, stupefied. If I could but resume my tranquil life of art, of long-continued meditation!

What notes of dismay, of a kind of frozen grief, of a capacity for pity, of those resources to be so largely tested by "Madame Bovary"!

"I am prepared for everything. I am like the pavement on the high road; misfortune tramps over me as it wills." "As for me, my eyes are dry as marble. Strange! The more expansive I find myself, fluid and abundant, in fictitious griefs, just in that proportion do the real griefs stay fixed in my heart, acrid and hard. They turn to crystal, there, one by one, as they come."

It is the daughter of that favourite sister who has now appeared as the editor of his letters from the year 1830 to 1850. She has introduced them by a sketch of his life, which the student of Flaubert's work will value, for she became in her turn her uncle's intimate companion, and has recorded some characteristic counsels to herself, the mature experience of his artistic life applied to the formation of the mind of a young girl. "When you take up a book," he would say, "you must swallow it at one mouthful. That is the only way to know it in its entirety. Accustom yourself to follow out an idea. I don't wish you should have that loose character in your thoughts which is the appanage of persons of your sex." The author of "Salammbo" taught her ancient

history. "I interrupted him sometimes," she tells us, "by the question, 'Was he a good man? — Cambyses, Alexander, Alcibiades.' 'Faith! they were not very accommodating members of society — *messieurs très commodes.* But what has that to do with you?'" He went to church with her, for the young French girl could not go alone — amazing complaisance it seemed in so marked a Freethinker — awaiting patiently, we must not be too sure with what kind of thoughts, till her duties were over.

La Bovary! — many a time she heard of that before she had any notion what the name meant. "I had a vague belief that it was a synonym for labour, perpetual labour. I assisted, a motionless witness, at the slow creation of those pages so severely elaborated." There he sat, month after month, seeking, sometimes with so much pain, the expression, "the phrase," weighing the retention or rejection of an epithet — his one fixed belief the belief in beauty, literary beauty, with liberal delight at beauty in other men's work, remembering after many years the precise place on the page of some approved form of sentence. He knew his favourite passage in Scripture,

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings!" "'Reflect on that, get to the bottom of it, if you can,' he would say to me, full of enthusiasm."

His "distractions" were limited to certain short absences in Paris for a day or two, about once in three months — *pour me retremper*. On the rare occasion of a longer visit it was necessary that his home companions should go with him; and then, on certain days, his rooms in the Boulevard du Temple were put in flowery array, and he entertained a select party of friends. "Whenever I re-enter Paris," he writes, "I breathe at my ease." But in truth he abhorred change. "Man is so poor a machine that a straw among the wheels spoils it." "I live like a Carthusian," he says; and again, "I am but a lizard, a literary lizard, warming himself all day long at the full sun of the beautiful." "For writing," his niece tells us, "he required extreme tension of mind, and he never found himself in the desired condition save in his own workroom, seated at his great round table, sure that nothing could come to disturb him. He had a passionate love of order, and ate sparingly. His force of will in all that

concerned his 'art' was immense." He troubled himself little about "moments of inspiration," the waiting on which he held to be a cause of "sterility." Get the habit of working in ordinary daylight, and then perhaps the ray of heavenly light may come. At times the monotony of his method of life, a monotony likely to continue to the end, weighed on the spirits, especially as the passing footsteps about him grew rarer and memory took the place of sensation: for, in spite of what people say, "memories don't fill one's house, they do but enlarge its solitude. There is now a multitude of places at which my heart bleeds as I pass. It seems to me," he writes — only in his twenty-fifth year — "that the angles of my life are worn down under the friction of all that has passed over it."

So his life continued to the last, as he had foreseen, somewhat painfully disturbed towards the end by the German war. That its barbarities should have been the work of a literary, a scientific people, was but the last expression of a soul of stupidity in things, to his view unmistakable. The invaders in occupation of Rouen made use of his house, but respectfully.

The end came in 1880, and found him at work, alone apparently, in his large study, with the five windows and wide views, where he had lived so long.

Madame Commanville has printed these letters, chiefly because she thought they revealed her uncle under a different light from that of his books. A kind of scandal attached to his writings, and the editor of his correspondence is certainly right in thinking that her own reminiscences of his life would, after all, make people esteem him as a man. In truth, life and letters alike reveal him not otherwise than as we divine him through his books — the passionate, laborious, conscientious artist, who had found affection and temperance indispensable to his art, abounding in sympathy for the simple people who came nearest to him, conscious of an immense mental superiority to almost every one, a superiority which kept him high and clean in all things, yet full of pity, of practical consideration for men and women as they must be. Anxious to think him a good man, his niece, with some costly generous acts known to herself in memory, was struck above all by that tranquil

devotion to art which seemed to have had about it something of the "seriousness and passion that are like a consecration"—something of religion.

IV

WORDSWORTH

THE ATHENÆUM, JANUARY 26, 1889

WORDSWORTH[1]

The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth. With an Introduction by John Morley. (Macmillan & Co.)

The Recluse. By William Wordsworth. (Same publishers.)

Selections from Wordsworth. By William Knight and other Members of the Wordsworth Society. With Preface and Notes. (Kegan Paul, Trench & Co.)

THE appearance of Prof. Knight's judicious 'Selections,' and of Messrs. Macmillan's collected edition of his works in one volume, with the first book of 'The Recluse,' now printed in its entirety for the first time, and a sensible

[1] In a very able review of *Essays from The Guardian* printed in *The Athenæum* for June 12, 1897, it was pointed out that "The article on Wordsworth will

introductory essay by Mr. John Morley, gives sufficient proof that general interest in Wordsworth is on the increase. Nothing could be better — nothing so well calculated as a careful study of Wordsworth to correct the faults of our bustling age as regards both thought and taste, and remind people, amid the vast contemporary expansion of the means and accessories of life, of the essential value of life itself. It was none other than Mill himself, so true a representative of the main tendencies of the spirit of our day, who protested that when the battle which he and his friends were waging had been won the world would "need more than ever those qualities which Wordsworth had kept alive and nourished."

---

be for the most part familiar to readers of the *Appreciations*. The Essay on Wordsworth, perhaps the most intimately critical of any of Pater's criticisms, appeared for the first time in the Fortnightly Review many years ago, [to wit: in April, 1874]. Part of it was used, word for word, in the *Guardian* and in the *Athenæum* review, so that Pater may certainly be said to have signified his own sense of the value of what he had to say in this notable passage of the Wordsworth essay by using it three times over before its appearance in the book."

In the new edition the poems are arranged, with their dates, as much as possible in the order of their composition — an arrangement which has its obvious uses for the student of the development of the poet's genius, though the older method of distributing his work into various groups of subject had its service as throwing light upon his poetic motives, more especially as coming from himself.

Mr. Morley in his introduction dwells on the fact of Wordsworth's singular personal happiness as having had much to do with the physiognomy of his work — a calm, sabbatic, mystic well-being some may think it; worldly prosperity De Quincey reckoned it. The poet's own flawless temperament, his fine mountain atmosphere of mind, had, of course, something to do with that. What a store of good fortune, what a contribution to happiness in the very finest sense of that word, is really involved in a cheerful, grateful, physical temperament, above all for a poet!

An intimate consciousness of the expression of natural things, which weighs, listens, penetrates, where the earlier phase of mind passed roughly by, is a large element in the complex-

ion of modern poetry. It has been remarked as a fact in mental history again and again. It reveals itself in many forms, but is certainly strongest and most attractive in the most characteristic products of modern literature as of modern art also: it is exemplified almost equally by writers as unlike each other as Senancour and Théophile Gautier. As a curious chapter in the history of human mind, its growth might be traced from Rousseau to Chateaubriand, from Chateaubriand to Victor Hugo. It has doubtless some latent connexion with those pantheistic theories which locate an intelligent soul in material things, and have largely exercised men's minds in some modern systems of philosophy; while it makes as much difference between ancient and modern landscape art as there is between the rough masks of an early mosaic and a portrait by Reynolds or Gainsborough. Of this new sense the writings of Wordsworth are the central and elementary expression; he is more simply and entirely preoccupied with it than any other poet, though there are fine expressions of precisely the same interest in so different a poet as Shelley. There was in

Wordsworth's own character, as we have seen, a certain natural contentment, a sort of inborn religious placidity, seldom found united with a sensibility so mobile as his, which was favourable to the quiet, habitual observation of inanimate or imperfectly animate existence. His life of eighty years is divided by no very profoundly felt incidents, its changes being almost wholly inward; it falls, like his work, into broad, untroubled, perhaps somewhat monotonous spaces. What it resembles most is the life of one of those early Flemish or Italian painters who, just because their minds were full of heavenly visions, passed, some of them, the better part of sixty years in quiet systematic industry. And this sort of placid life matured in Wordsworth a quite unusual sensibility, really innate in him, to the sights and sounds of the natural world. It is to this world, and to a world of congruous meditation thereon, that we see him retiring in this newly published poem of 'The Recluse' — taking leave, without much count of costs, of the world of business, of action and ambition, as also of all that, for the majority of mankind, counts as sensuous enjoyment.

And so it came about that this sense of a life, a living soul, in natural objects, which in most poetry is but a rhetorical artifice, is with Wordsworth the assertion of what for him is almost literal fact. To him every natural object seemed to possess more or less of a moral or spiritual life — to be capable of a companionship with humanity full of expression, of inexplicable affinities, and delicacies of intercourse. It was like a survival, in the peculiar intellectual temperament of a man of letters at the end of the eighteenth century, of that primitive condition which some philosophers have traced in the general history of human culture, in which all outward objects alike, including even the works of men's hands, were believed to be endowed with animation, and the world seemed "full of souls." The eighteenth century had had but little of such mysticism. But then Wordsworth was essentially a leader of the revolt against the hard reign of the mere understanding in that century, a pioneer of thoughts which have been so different in our own.

And it was through nature thus ennobled by a semblance of passion and thought that

Wordsworth approached the spectacle of human life. Human life, indeed, is for him at first only an additional accidental grace upon this expressive landscape. When he thought of men and women, it was of men and women as in the presence, and under the influence of the spell, of those effective natural objects, and linked to them by many associations. The close connexion of humanity with natural objects, the habitual association of his feelings and thoughts with a particular neighbourhood — colourless perhaps, certainly limited — has sometimes seemed to degrade those who have been the subjects of its influence, as if it did but reinforce that physical connexion of our nature with the actual lime and clay of the soil which is always drawing us nearer to our end. But for Wordsworth these influences tended to the dignity of human nature, because they tended to tranquillise it. He raises nature to the level of human thought to give it power and expression; he subdues man to the level of nature, and gives him thereby a certain breadth and vastness and solemnity. The "leech-gatherer" on the moor, the "woman

stepping westward," are for him natural objects, almost in the same sense as the aged thorn or the lichened rock on the heath. In this sense the leader of the "Lake School," in spite of an earnest preoccupation with man, his thoughts, his destiny, is the poet of nature.

And of nature, after all, in its modesty. The English lake country has, of course, its grandeurs. But the peculiar function of Wordsworth's genius, as carrying in it a power to open out the soul of apparently little or familiar things, would have found its true test had he become the poet of Surrey, say, and the prophet of its life. The glories of Italy and Switzerland, though he did write a little about them, had too potent a material life of their own to serve greatly his poetic purpose.

In Wordsworth's prefatory advertisement to the first edition of 'The Prelude,' published in 1850, it is stated that that work was intended to be introductory to 'The Recluse,' and that 'The Recluse,' if completed, would have consisted of three parts. The second part is 'The Excursion.' The third part was only planned; but the first book of the first

part was left in manuscript by Wordsworth — though in manuscript, it is said, in no great condition of forwardness for the printers. This book, now for the first time printed *in extenso* (a very noble passage from it found place in that prose advertisement to 'The Excursion'), is the great novelty of this latest edition of Wordsworth's poetry: it was well worth adding to the poet's great bequest to English literature. A true student of his work, who has formulated for himself what he supposes to be the leading characteristics of Wordsworth's genius, will feel, we think, lively interest in testing them by the various fine passages in what is here presented for the first time. Let the following serve for a sample: —

Thickets full of songsters, and the voice
Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound
Heard now and then from morn to latest eve,
Admonishing the man who walks below
Of solitude and silence in the sky?
These have we, and a thousand nooks of earth
Have also these, but nowhere else is found,
Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here as it abides by day,

By night, here only; or in chosen minds
That take it with them hence, where'er they go.
— 'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual spot,
This small abiding-place of many men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
A whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself, and happy in itself,
Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

V

A POET WITH SOMETHING TO SAY

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE, MARCH 23, 1889

A POET WITH SOMETHING TO SAY[1]

THE student of modern literature, turning to the spectacle of our modern life, notes there a variety and complexity which seem to defy the limitations of verse structure, as if more and more any large record of humanity must necessarily be in prose. Yet there is certainly abundant proof that the beauty and sorrow of the world can still kindle satisfying verse, in a volume recently published under the significant title of "Nights and Days," being, in effect, concentrations, powerfully dramatic, of what we call the light and shadow of life; although, with Art, as Mr. Symons conceives —

> Since, of man with trouble born to death
> She sings, her song is less of Days than Nights.

[1] "Nights and Days." By Arthur Symons. (London: Macmillan and Co. 1889.)

Readers of contemporary verse who may regret in much of it, amid an admirable achievement of poetic form, a certain lack of poetic matter, will find substance here — abundant poetic substance, developing, as by its own organic force, the poetic forms proper to it, with natural vigour.

Mr. Symons's themes, then, are almost exclusively those of the present day, studied, as must needs happen with a very young writer, rather through literature than life; through the literature, however, which is most in touch with the actual life around us. "J'aime passionnément la passion," he might say with Stendhal: and in two main forms. The reader of Dante will remember those words of La Pia in the "Purgatorio," so dramatic in their brevity that they have seemed to interpret many a problematic scene of pictorial art. Shape their exacter meaning as we may, they record an instance of human passion, under the influence of some intellectual subtlety in the air, going to its end by paths round-about. Love's casuistries, impassioned satiety, love's inversion into cruelty, are experiences even more characteristic of our late day than of

Dante's somewhat sophisticated middle age; and it is just this complexion of sentiment — a grand passion, entangled in scruples, refinements, after-thoughts, reserved, repressed, but none the less masterful for that, conserving all its energies for expression in some unexpected way — that Mr. Symons presents, with unmistakable insight, in one group of his poems, at the head of which we should place "An Act of Mercy" — odd and remote, mercy's self turned malignant — or "A Revenge," or, perhaps, in long-drawn sonnet-series, "A Lover's Progress" — progress, one half at least, in merely intellectual fineness, as if love had heard "All the Yea and Nay of life," and taken his degree, in some school of metaphysical philosophy. Like the hero in his own "Interlude of Helena and Faustus," the modern lover, as Mr. Symons conceives him, claims to have seen in their fulness

> The workings of the world Plato but dreamt of.

He welcomes, as an added source of interest in the study of it, the curious subtlety to which the human soul has come even in its passions.

"Thy speech hath not the largeness of my sires," says Helena to Faustus; but this

"largeness" Mr. Symons attains in just the converse of this remotely conceived, exotic, casuistical passion, in that rural tragedy, the tragedy of the poor generally (the tyranny of love, here too, sometimes turning to cruelty), in a group of poignant stories, told with unflinching dramatic sincerity, which is not afraid of the smallest incident that has the suggestion of true feeling in it. The elementary passions of men and women in their exclusive strength, the fierce, vengeful sense of outraged honour in the humble, wild hunger, in mortal conflict with the ideal of homely dignity, as Crabbe or Wordsworth understood it, and, beyond these miserable, ragged ends of existence, the white dawn possible for humanity, for "Esther Bray," for "Red Bredbury," for "Margery of the Fens," whose wronged honour and affection has made her a witch —

Go, and leave me alone. I'm past your help, I shall lie,
As she lay, through the night, and at morn, as she went in the rain, I shall die.
Go, and leave me alone. Let me die as I lived. But oh,
If the wind wouldn't cry and wail with the baby's cry as I go!

And this too, the tragedy of the poor as it must always be with us, finds its still more harshly satiric inverse in certain poems, like "A Café Singer," and other Parisian grotesques, for the delineation of the deepest tragedy of all, underlying that world of sickly gaslight and artificial flowers which apes the tuberose conventionalities of the ultra-refined; often with a touch of lunacy about it, or the partial lunacy of narcotism — "the soul at pawn" — or that violent religious reaction which is like a narcotic. These very modern notes also are made to contribute their gloom to the dramatic effect of life in these poems.

Set over against this impressively painted series of nights and days, often forbidding, a faith in the eternal value of art is throughout maintained;

> Art alone
> Changeless among the changing made;

as amply compensating for all other defects in the poet's finding of things; though on what grounds we hardly see, except his own deep, unaffected sense of it. Its witness to eternal beauty comes in directly, as nature itself, with tranquillising influence, contrives to do in this

volume, in interludes of wholesome air, as through open doors, upon those hot, impassioned scenes. Yet close as art comes in these very poems, for example, to the lives of men, to interpret the beauty and sorrow there, Mr. Symons is anxious to disavow any practical pretension to alter or affect the nature of things thereby: —

"She probes an ancient wound yet brings no balm."

And yet pity (who that reads can doubt it?) is a large constituent of this writer's temper, — natural pity, contending with the somewhat artificial modern preference for telling and leaving a story in all its harsh, unrelieved effect. The appeal of a pale, smitten face has perhaps never been rendered more touchingly than in "A Village Mariana."

The complex, perhaps too matterful, soul of our century has found in Mr. Browning, and some other excellent modern English poets, the capacity for dealing masterfully with it, excepting only that it has been too much for their perfect lucidity of mind, or at least of style, so that they take a good deal of time to read. In an age of excellent poets, people

sometimes speculate wherein any new and original force in poetry may be thought likely to reveal itself; and some may have thought that just as, for a poet after Dryden, nothing was left but correctness, and thereupon the genius of Pope became correct, with a correctness which made him profoundly original; so the *cachet* of a new-born poetry for ourselves may lie precisely in that gift of lucidity, given a genuine grapple with difficult matter. The finer pieces in this volume, certainly, any poet of our day might be glad to own, for their substance, their dramatic hold on life, their fine scholarship; and they have this eminent merit, among many fine qualities of style, — readers need fear no difficulty in them. In this new poet the rich poetic vintage of our time has run clear at last.

VI

"IT IS THYSELF"

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE, APRIL 15, 1889

"IT IS THYSELF"[1]

"One knocked at the Beloved's door: and a Voice asked from within, Who is there? and he answered, It is I. And the door was not opened. And after a year he returned and knocked again at the door. And again the Voice asked, Who is there? and he said, It is Thyself! And the door was opened to him."

THE author of this volume, who, with those pretty words on its title-page, seems modestly to disavow that difference from other people on which poets are apt to pride themselves, is, we judge, a Russian, of French culture, who, taken with a love of the English genius, has turned to that somewhat antique phase of our poetry which has ceased to be altogether vernacular, and has learned to write therein like an Englishman; certainly, with much genuine insight and sympathy. The best of those

[1] **It is Thyself. By Mark André Raffalovich. (London: Walter Scott. 1889.)**

pieces, indeed, might find their place in an anthology of the later Elizabethan or early Jacobean muse, in a certain mood, half serious, half playful, not without a grain of satire. Mr. Raffalovich has mastered many of its quaint charms, its trick, especially, of seizing, in the little graces of actual life, of dress for instance, the poetic touch.

There are no colours that have sworn
  Such bitter enmity
But may be reconciled and worn,
  My dearest one, by thee.

Thy wearing shall do wonders
  For those same colours summer links,
But man more tasteful sunders:
  The purplest blues, the crudest pinks.

I know that yellows unsubdued
  The crabbed reds repel,
But thou, quite heedless of their feud,
  Their violence canst quell.

Thy wearing shall make harmless
  Magenta, mauve, and green, shot through
With purple, nor quite charmless
  Thy flag-like sporting of bright blue.

No bolder than a brilliant morn
  On thy victorious way,
No less thyself thou canst adorn
  Than can a summer's day.

There is surely a pleasant vein of true poetry in that, akin to Herrick.

This brief collection, in short, with no titles except that general one, making it all the easier to sip at it lightly, is really a series of pleasant afterthoughts on human life, in what may be called its spring colours. It indicates, indeed, so true a sense of what is rightly attractive in trifles, that really poetic touch in the mere toys of life which suggest or is suggested by the living undercurrent of its deepest feelings that we doubt whether the author has found in English verse the proper scope for his talents. To add to the great body of English literature is not the natural function of a foreigner, however clever; but rather the critical one of reporting, of making known at home or abroad the real flowers, as distinguished from many imitation ones, the real graces of existence, to be gathered in the more fortunate regions of that English civilisation, which Parisians and Russians (Mr. Raffalovich being not alone in his preference) are said just now so greatly to affect.

VII

FABRE'S "TOUSSAINT GALABRU"

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, APRIL, 1889

FABRE'S "TOUSSAINT GALABRU" [1]

M. FABRE'S recent novel, *Toussaint Galabru*, is not to be recommended to readers seeking first acquaintance with his works, but will charm those who already know them. In *Les Courbezon*, and *Lucifer*, ranking, it may be thought, above even *L'Abbé Tigrane*, in a series of stories, worthy to accompany those remarkable books, he has made his own, and conveys to us, a district of France, gloomy in spite of its almonds, its oil and wine, but certainly grandiose. The large towns, the sparse hamlets, the wide landscape, of the Cevennes, are, for his books (the list of which, thanks to the application of a somewhat fastidious writer, is becoming a long one), what Alsace is to

[1] *Toussaint Galabru*. By Ferdinand Fabre. (Paris: Charpentier & Cie. 1887.)

Messrs. Erckmann-Chatrian; and as with these pleasant writers, as must needs be the result of such faithfulness to a single locality in a world like our modern one, Fabre's interest is ever in the humbler children of its soil — the earthy strength of their passions, their pleasures with all the natural radiancy of those of children, and, of course far more numerous, their pains. What distinguishes him from those Alsatian writers, what constitutes his distinction in the abstract, is his recognition of the religious, the catholic, ideal, intervening masterfully throughout the picture he presents of life, as the only mode of poetry realisable by the poor, and, although it may do a great deal more beside, certainly doing the work of poetry effectively. That ideal, with its weighty sanctions, brings into full relief all the primitive, recusant, militant force of half-regenerate nature. *Les Courbezon*, certainly, displays the passions of the peasant, with a power of realism (to give that name to what is only the directest use of imaginative skill) worthy of M. Zola at his best. And then, there is nothing in Fabre to shock the most scrupulous conscience, the daintiest taste.

Every traveller to Italy has felt the charm of those roomy sacristies, admitted to which for the inspection of some ancient tomb or fresco, one is presently overcome by their reverend quiet; the people coming and going there, devout or at least on devout business, their voices at half-pitch, not without a touch of humour in what seems to express, like a picture, the best side, the really ideal side, midway between the altar and the home, of the ecclesiastical life. Just such an interior, with many a shrewd study of clerical faces, *rusé* yet essentially honest, ambitious but for the most part wonderfully controlled, is afforded by the pen of Ferdinand Fabre.

And the passions he treats of in priests are strictly clerical — most often their ambitions: nôt the errant humours of the mere man in the priest, but movements of spirit properly incidental to the clerical type itself. Turning to those peasant types, at first sight so strongly contrasted with it, he shows great acquaintance again with the sources, the effects, of average human feeling: but it will still be, in contact — in contact, as its conscience, its better mind, its ideal — with the institutions of religion:

these peasants, one feels, are the *chantres* in their village churches. So, of this latest book, the true hero is not the strange being who actually lends it his name, a character disappearing, surely, even from those remote valleys —the wizard, who, if he has no mysterious powers, has a mysterious influence, with a soul of good in his evil, often helping the miserable by power of sympathy where doctor and priest are of no avail, the enemy, because in a sense a real rival, of M. le Curé. No! the hero is not Toussaint Galabru, but another striking clerical personage, whose portrait Fabre here adds to his gallery. From the first pages, where, still a schoolboy, Baptistin is helping to make the coffin of the defunct *maire*, lying down in it at his father's bidding, being already of the same stature with that dignitary, to test its capacity —from that time to the end, where he leads a grand *impromptu* function, in which the Sacraments are taken, across the snowy hills on Christmas night, to the dying sorcerer, we see him clearly, and understand — understand the real unity of the career of this creature of nature, who is also so true a priest. To the last, indeed, the Abbé knows more of

the quails, the varied bird-life of the Cevennes, than of the life of souls. Still, even with him, droll Baptistin Nizerolles, the priesthood, honestly taken, is spiritually a success. Of belief, certainly, he has plenty; and be it through faith, or tact, or mere *esprit de corps*, has more self-restraint, more truth to nature, a more watchful and general charity than his parishioners. The rude lips and hands seem graced when men need it most with something of angelic tones, of an angelic touch.

The reader will naturally look in such a writer for a graphic, an impressive, a discreet style — not in vain. M. Fabre is a writer who has a fine sense of his words.

VIII

"CORRESPONDANCE DE GUSTAVE FLAUBERT"

THE ATHENÆUM, AUGUST 3, 1889

"CORRESPONDANCE DE GUSTAVE FLAUBERT"

Correspondance de Gustave Flaubert. Deuxième Série (1850-54). (Paris, Charpentier.)

THE second volume of Gustave Flaubert's correspondence, just now published, is even richer than the first, alike in those counsels of literary art Flaubert was pre-eminently fitted to give, and in lights, direct and indirect, on his own work. The letters belong to a short period in his life, from his twenty-eighth to his thirty-second year (1850-54), during which he was an exceptionally expansive correspondent, but otherwise chiefly occupied in the composition of 'Madame Bovary,' a work of immense labour, as also of great and original genius. The more systematic student might draw from these letters many an interesting paragraph to

add, by way of foot-notes, to that impressive book.

The earlier letters find Flaubert still in the East, recording abundantly those half-savage notes of ancient civilisation which are in sympathy with the fierce natural colouring of the country he loved so well. The author of 'Salammbo' and 'Herodias' is to be detected already in this lively vignette from an Oriental square:—

"Nothing is more graceful than the spectacle of all those men [the Dervishes] waltzing, with their great petticoats twisted, their ecstatic faces lifted to the sky. They turn, without a moment's pause, for about an hour. One of them assured us that, if he were not obliged to hold his hands above his head, he could turn for six hours continuously."

Even here, then, it is the calm of the East which expresses itself—the calm, perhaps the emptiness, of the Oriental, of which he has fixed the type in the following sketch:—

"I have seen certain dancing girls, who balanced themselves with the regularity of a palm tree. Their eyes, of a profound depth, express calm only—nothing but the calm, the emptiness, of the desert. It is the same with the men. What admirable heads! heads which seem to be turning over within them the grandest thoughts in the world. But tap on them! and

there will be only the empty beer-glass, the deserted sepulchre. Whence then the majesty of their external form? of what does it really hold? Of the absence, I should reply, of all passion. They have the beauty of the ruminating ox, of the greyhound in its race, the floating eagle — that sentiment of fatality which is fulfilled in these. A conviction of the nothingness of man gives to all they do, their looks, their attitudes, a resigned but grandiose character. Their loose and easy raiment, lending itself freely to every movement of the body, is always in closest accord with the wearer and his functions; with the sky, too, by its colour: and then the sun! There is an immense *ennui* there in the sun, which consumes everything."

But it is as brief essays in literary criticism that these letters are most effective. Exquisitely personal essays, self-explanatory, or by way of confession, written almost exclusively to one person — a perfectly sympathetic friend, engaged like the writer in serious literary work — they possess almost the unity, the connected current of a book. It is to Madame X., however, that Flaubert makes this cynical admission about women:

"What I reproach in women, above all, is their need of *poetisation*, of forcing poetry into things. A man may be in love with his laundress, but will know that she is stupid, though he may not enjoy her company the less. But if a woman loves her inferior, he is

straightway an unrecognised genius, a superior soul, or the like. And to such a degree does this innate disposition to see crooked prevail, that woman can perceive neither truth when they encounter it, nor beauty where it really exists. This fault is the true cause of the deceptions of which they so often complain. To require oranges of apple trees is a common malady with them."

Flaubert, as seen in these letters, was undoubtedly a somewhat austere lover. His true mistress was his art. Counsels of art there are — for the most part, the best thing he has to offer. Only rarely does he show how he could play the lover: —

"Your love penetrates me at last, like warm rain, and I feel myself searched through with it, to the bottom of my heart. Have you not everything that could make me love you? body, wit, tenderness? You are simple of soul and strong of head; not poetic, yet a poet in extreme degree. There is nothing but good in you: and you are wholly, as your bosom is, white, and soft to touch. I try sometimes to fancy how your face will look when you are old, and it seems to me I shall love you still as much as now, perhaps more."

In contrast with the majority of writers, apt to make a false pretence of facility, it is of his labour that Flaubert boasts. That was because, after all, labour did but set free the innate lights of a true diamond; it realised, was a

ministry to, the great imaginative gift of which he was irresistibly conscious. It was worth his while!

"As for me, the more I feel the difficulties of good writing, the more my boldness grows. It is this preserves me from the pedantry into which I should otherwise fall. I have plans for books, the composition of which would occupy the rest of my life: and if there happen to me, sometimes, cruel moments, which well-nigh make me weep with anger (so great do I feel my weakness to be), there are others also when I can scarce contain myself for joy: something from the depths within me, for which voluptuous is no word, overflows for me in sudden leaps. I feel transported, almost inebriate, with my own thoughts, as if there came to me, at some window within, a puff of warm perfumes. I shall never go very far, and know how much I lack; but the task I undertake will surely be executed by another. I shall have put on the true road some one better endowed, better born, for the purpose, than myself. The determination to give to prose the rhythm of verse, leaving it still veritable prose; to write the story of common life as history or the epic gets written (that if to say, without detriment to the natural truth of the subject), is perhaps impossible. I ask myself the question sometimes. Yet it is perhaps a considerable, an original thing, to have tried. I shall have had my permanent value for my obstinacy. And who knows? One day I may find a good *motif*, an air entirely within the compass of my voice: and at any rate I shall have passed my life not ignobly, often with delight. Yet still it is saddening to think how

many great men arrive easily at the desired effect, by means beyond the limits of conscious art. What could be worse built than many things in Rabelais, Cervantes, Molière, Hugo? But, then, what sudden thrusts of power! What power in a single word!"

Impersonality in art, the literary ideal of Gustave Flaubert, is perhaps no more possible than realism. The artist *will* be felt; his subjectivity must and will colour the incidents, as his very bodily eye *selects* the aspects of things. By force of an immense and continuous effort, however, the whole scope of which these letters enable us to measure, Flaubert did keep 'Madame Bovary' at a great distance from himself; the author might be thought to have been completely hidden out of sight in his work. Yet even here he transpires, clearly enough, from time to time; and the morbid sense of life, everywhere impressed in the very atmosphere of that sombre history, came certainly of the writer himself. The cruelty of the ways of things—that is a conviction of which the development is partly traceable in these letters.

"Provided the brain remains! That is the chief thing. But how nothingness invades us! We are scarcely born ere decay begins for us, in such a way

that the whole of life is but one long combat with it, more and more triumphant, on its part, to the consummation, namely, death; and then the reign of decay is exclusive. There have been at most two or three years in which I was really entire—from seventeen to nineteen. I was splendid just then, though I scarce like to say so now; enough to attract the eyes of a whole assembly of spectators, as happened to me at Rouen, on the first presentation of 'Ruy Blas.' Ever since then I have deteriorated at a furious pace. There are mornings when I feel afraid to look at myself, so worn and used-up am I grown."

'Madame Bovary,' of course, was a tribute to science; and Flaubert had no dread, great hopes rather, of the service of science in imaginative literature, though the combat between scientific truth—mental physiology and the like—and that perfectly finished academic style he preferred, might prove a hard one. We might be all of us, since Sophocles—well, "tattooed savages!" but still, there was "something else in art besides rectitude of line and the well-polished surface." The difficulty lay in the limitations of language, which it would be the literary artist's true contention to enlarge. "We have too many things, too few words. 'Tis from that comes the torture of the fine literary

conscience." But it was one's duty, none the less, to accept all, "imprint all, and, above all, fix one's *point d'appui* in the present." Literature, he held, would take more and more the modes of action which now seem to belong exclusively to science. It would be, above all, *exposante* — by way of exposition; by which, he was careful to point out, he by no means intended *didactic*. One must make pictures, by way of showing nature as she really is; only, the pictures must be complete ones. We must paint both sides, the upper and under. Style — what it might be, if writers faithfully cherished it — that was the subject of his perpetual consideration. Here is a sketch of the prose style of the future: —

"Style, as I conceive it, style as it will be realised some day — in ten years, or ten generations! It would be rhythmical as verse itself, precise as the language of science; and with undulations — a swelling of the violin! plumage of fire! A style which would enter into the idea like the point of a lancet; when thought would travel over the smooth surfaces like a canoe with fair winds behind it. Prose is but of yesterday, it must be confessed. Verse is *par excellence* the form of the ancient literatures. All possible prosodic combinations have been already made; those of prose are still to make."

The effort, certainly, cost him much; how much we may partly see in these letters, the more as 'Madame Bovary,' on which he was then mainly at work, made a large demand also on his impersonality:—

"The cause of my going so slowly is just this, that nothing in that book ['Madame Bovary'] is drawn from myself. Never has my own personality been so useless to me. It may be, perhaps, that hereafter I shall do stronger things. I hope so, but I can hardly imagine I shall do anything more skilful. Here everything is of the head. If it has been false in aim, I shall always feel that it has been a good mental exercise. But after all, what is the non-natural to others is the natural to me — the extraordinary, the fantastic, the wild chase, mythologic, or metaphysic. 'Saint Antoine' did not require of me one quarter of the tension of mind 'Madame Bovary' has caused me. 'Saint Antoine' was a discharge: I had nothing but pleasure in writing it; and the eighteen months devoted to the composition of its five hundred pages were the most thoroughly voluptuous of my life, hitherto. Judge, then, of my condition in writing 'Madame Bovary.' I must needs put myself every minute into a skin not mine, and antipathetic to me. For six months now I have been making love Platonically; and at the present moment my exaltation of mind is that of a good Catholic: I am longing to go to confession."

A constant reader of Montaigne, Flaubert pushed to the utmost the habit of doubt, as

leading to artistic detachment from all practical ends:—

"Posterity will not be slow in cruel desertion of those who have determined to be useful, and have sung 'for a cause.' It cares very little for Chateaubriand, and his resuscitation of mediæval religion; for Béranger, with his libertine philosophy; will soon care little for Lamartine and his religious humanitarianism. Truth is never in the present; and if one attaches oneself to the present, there comes an end of one. At the present moment, I believe that even a thinker (and the artist, surely, is three times a thinker) should have no convictions."

Flaubert himself, whatever we may think of that, had certainly attained a remarkable degree of detachment from the ordinary interests of mankind.

Over and above its weightier contributions to the knowledge of Flaubert, to the knowledge and practice of literature at its best, this volume, like its predecessor, abounds in striking occasional thoughts:—

"There is no imagination in France. If you want to make real poetry pass, you must be clever enough to disguise it."

"In youth one associates the future realisation of one's dreams with the existence of the actual people around us. In proportion as those existences disappear, our dreams also depart."

"Nothing is more useless than those heroic friendships which require exceptional circumstances to prove them. The great difficulty is to find some one who does not rack your nerves in every one of the various ordinary occurrences of life."

"The dimensions of a soul may be measured by its power of suffering, as we calculate the depth of rivers by their current."

"Formerly, people believed that the sugar-cane alone yielded sugar; nowadays it is extracted from almost anything. It is the same with poetry. Let us draw it, no matter whence, for it lies everywhere, and in all things. Let us habituate ourselves to regard the world as a work of art, the processes of which are to be reproduced in our works."

"To have talent, one must be convinced one has it; and to keep the conscience pure, we must put it above the consciences of all other people."

"We retain always a certain grudge against any one who instructs us."

"What is best in art will always escape people of mediocrity, that is to say, more than three quarters of the human race."

"Let our enemies speak evil of us! it is their proper function. It is worse when friends speak well of us foolishly."

"Materialists and spiritualists, in about equal degree, prevent the knowledge of matter and spirit alike, because they sever one from the other. The one party make man an angel, the other a swine."

"In proportion as it advances, art will be more and more scientific, even as science will become artistic. The two will rejoin each other at the summit, after separating at the base."

"Let us be ourselves, and nothing else! 'What is your duty? What each day requires.' That is Goethe's notion. Let *us* do our duty; which is, to try to write well. What a society of saints we should be, if only each one of us did his duty!"

IX

"A CENTURY OF REVOLUTION"

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, DECEMBER, 1889

"A CENTURY OF REVOLUTION"[1]

ONE of the privileges of the larger survey of historical phenomena enjoyed by our own generation, looking back now over many unexpected revivals in doctrine and practice, is the assurance that there are no lost causes. Through the complexity of things, as of men's thoughts about them, the last word, on this side or that, never gets spoken. For example: the force, the secret, if not of the future, at the present, may seem to be with 'the idea, the faith, the dogma,' (if indeed there really was anything of the kind) 'underlying' that blind conflict labelled historically as *The French Revolution.* Yet Catholicism, which, if any vast practical

1 *A Century of Revolution.* By William Samuel Lilly. (Chapman and Hall. 1889.)

movement ever had one, has an idea underlying it (Catholicism, which the Revolution certainly did its best to destroy but only succeeded in putting on its mettle), possessing its share of permanent truth to human experience, still finds therefore from time to time its adherents, alike among the simple who 'must needs live' and the wise who must needs reflect, as it has found just now an able and animated vindicator in the author of *A Century of Revolution*.

As such a vindicator Mr. Lilly proposes to test the Revolution by its fruits from 1789 to 1889 — by its supposed operation in the world, its effort 'to mix with life,' in the three spheres of politics, science, and art. Judged by his chapter on 'The Revolution and Liberty,' he would appear peculiarly well fitted for that useful function of excepting against, and qualifying, any too confident faith in the final acceptability of this or the other theoretic programme. He is no idolator, for instance — no idyllist, shall we say? — of the French peasant, as the Revolution has left him. It is sad to think that, after paying such a price for emancipation, so many millions of the

French people still not only eat the bread of sorrow, but with so sordid a heart. As a critic of the worship of the Revolution, affected or sincere, and the somewhat second-rate performers therein, as also of those later phases of Liberalism which figure as derivative from it, he proves himself an effective controversialist, capable of a good deal of fine raillery, sometimes of racy mockery for his opponents, equipped with various reading and a style singularly well adapted to the purpose of popular exposition.

But Mr. Lilly is not only a critic of the Revolution, of the tree and its supposed fruits. His exceptions come by way of the assertion of a counter-principle, an abstract ideal of his own; and effectiveness in asserting an abstract ideal can, for the most part, be attained only at the cost of those very qualifications in which at times Mr. Lilly shows himself so expert, and in which what we may call the 'æsthetic' spirit, driving always at the concrete, at the precise differentiation of the concrete, event or person, finds its opportunity. It is the spirit which in dealing with the Revolution, for instance, or with the Catholicism

Mr. Lilly here so ably upholds against it, does justice to the irregularities, the inconsistencies, the 'faults' as the geologist calls them, which traverse and set at nought our abstract or ideal assumptions of the nature of this or that 'tendency' in human affairs. One thing, certainly, the Revolution left to the century which followed it — a large stock, not merely of questionable abstract propositions, but also of abstract terms of very doubtful serviceableness in the study of history. Abstract terms like *Liberty*, *Democracy*, *Atheism* — abstract propositions about them in whatever interest, make one think sometimes of those worn old screws which turn either way with equal facility, and compact nothing. What we mean might be illustrated by Mr. Lilly's chapter on 'The Revolution and Art;' telling as it really is as an attack on the 'naturalism' which he holds to be the fruit of the Revolution, especially in literature. But was 'naturalism,' even as he understands it, finding it at its height in M. Zola's *Nana*, really born in 1789? did it not exist, like the revolutionary temper itself, from of old? Is not a certain kind of naturalism an element in all living art?

And then *Nana* is very far from being characteristic of the whole scope of M. Zola's work. Was not the Revolution, after all, a kind of vicious running to seed of that principle of Individualism so nobly vindicated by Mr. Lilly himself as a discovery of Christianity or Catholicism?

For in developing the spirit, the ~~ethos~~, of Catholicism, compatible or incompatible as it may be with Revolution, he writes admirably, with a fulness of historic and personal insight into what Christianity, in that most venerable of its forms, has been to each and all of us, with touches also of a really masculine eloquence, and a dignity worthy of so great a subject, of his own chivalry for it. A Catholic, writing for the general public, with a sense perhaps that reason is not too obviously on his side, may sometimes be tempted to be more ingenious than he needs. There is nothing of that kind in Mr. Lilly. Not so much ingenious as ingenuous in the best sense, he takes our old-fashioned Catechism as a 'summary of the fundamental religious and ethical conceptions of Christendom,' and (must it be said?) with true 'liberalism' after

all, is ready to accept what is popularly known as Darwinism; feels as strongly as Newman himself the unreasonableness of forcing people's opinions; makes in passing an effective attack on vivisection; and is catholic in his æsthetic tastes, at least till 1789 is concerned. If he deals a little too much with abstractions, yet he has real insight into, a real power over them, available both for thought and utterance, which we would willingly illustrate by quotation.

'The past is really indestructible. You do not destroy it by destroying its symbols.'

'An artist is one who reproduces the world in his own image and likeness.'

'The advance of the general mind is so slow as to be imperceptible unless viewed at a distance.'

Mr. Lilly's judgments are not seldom as compact, as aphoristic, as these; and, if only by way of a variation of routine, in this age of foregone conclusions, it is a pleasure to see gifts and accomplishments such as his in service, not as a mere matter of course, on the side of Revolution.

X

A NOVEL BY MR. OSCAR WILDE

THE BOOKMAN, NOVEMBER, 1891

A NOVEL BY MR. OSCAR WILDE [1]

THERE is always something of an excellent talker about the writing of Mr. Oscar Wilde; and in his hands, as happens so rarely with those who practise it, the form of dialogue is justified by its being really alive. His genial, laughter-loving sense of life and its enjoyable intercourse, goes far to obviate any crudity there may be in the paradox, with which, as with the bright and shining truth which often underlies it, Mr. Wilde, startling his "countrymen," carries on, more perhaps than any other writer, the brilliant critical work of Matthew Arnold. *The Decay of Lying*, for instance, is all but unique in its half-humorous, yet wholly con-

[1] 'The Picture of Dorian Gray.' By Oscar Wilde. (Ward, Lock and Co., London, New York, and Melbourne.)

vinced, presentment of certain valuable truths of criticism. Conversational ease, the fluidity of life, felicitous expression, are qualities which have a natural alliance to the successful writing of fiction; and side by side with Mr. Wilde's *Intentions* (so he entitles his critical efforts) comes a novel, certainly original, and affording the reader a fair opportunity of comparing his practice as a creative artist with many a precept he has enounced as critic concerning it.

A wholesome dislike of the common-place, rightly or wrongly identified by him with the *bourgeois*, with our middle-class — its habits and tastes — leads him to protest emphatically against so-called "realism" in art; life, as he argues, with much plausibility, as a matter of fact, when it is really awake, follows art — the fashion an effective artist sets; while art, on the other hand, influential and effective art, has never taken its cue from actual life. In *Dorian Gray* he is true certainly, on the whole, to the æsthetic philosophy of his *Intentions;* yet not infallibly, even on this point: there is a certain amount of the intrusion of real life and its sordid aspects — the low theatre, the pleasures and griefs, the faces

of some very unrefined people, managed, of course, cleverly enough. The interlude of Jim Vane, his half-sullen but wholly faithful care for his sister's honour, is as good as perhaps anything of the kind, marked by a homely but real pathos, sufficiently proving a versatility in the writer's talent, which should make his books popular. Clever always, this book, however, seems intended to set forth anything but a homely philosophy of life for the middle-class — a kind of dainty Epicurean theory, rather — yet fails, to some degree, in this; and one can see why. A true Epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde's hero — his heroes are bent on doing as speedily, as completely as they can, is to lose, or lower, organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development. As a story, however, a partly supernatural story, it is first-rate in artistic management; those Epicurean niceties only adding to the decorative colour of its central figure, like so many exotic flowers, like the

charming scenery, and the perpetual, epigrammatic, surprising, yet so natural, conversations, like an atmosphere all about it. All that pleasant accessory detail, taken straight from the culture, the intellectual and social interests, the conventionalities, of the moment, have, in fact, after all, the effect of the better sort of realism, throwing into relief the adroitly-devised supernatural element after the manner of Poe, but with a grace he never reached, which supersedes that earlier didactic purpose, and makes the quite sufficing interest of an excellent story.

We like the hero, and, spite of his, somewhat unsociable, devotion to his art, Hallward, better than Lord Henry Wotton. He has too much of a not very really refined world in and about him, and his somewhat cynic opinions, which seem sometimes to be those of the writer, who may, however, have intended Lord Henry as a satiric sketch. Mr. Wilde can hardly have intended him, with his cynic amity of mind and temper, any more than the miserable end of Dorian himself, to figure the motive and tendency of a true Cyrenaic or Epicurean doctrine of life. In contrast with

Hallward, the artist, whose sensibilities idealise the world around him, the personality of Dorian Gray, above all, into something magnificent and strange, we might say that Lord Henry, and even more the, from the first, suicidal hero, loses too much in life to be a true Epicurean — loses so much in the way of impressions, of pleasant memories, and subsequent hopes, which Hallward, by a really Epicurean economy, manages to secure. It should be said, however, in fairness, that the writer is impersonal: seems not to have identified himself entirely with any one of his characters: and Wotton's cynicism, or whatever it be, at least makes a very clever story possible. He becomes the spoiler of the fair young man, whose bodily form remains un-aged; while his picture, the *chef d'œuvre* of the artist Hallward, changes miraculously with the gradual corruption of his soul. How true, what a light on the artistic nature, is the following on actual personalities and their revealing influence in art. We quote it as an example of Mr. Wilde's more serious style.

"I sometimes think that there are only two eras of any importance in the world's history. The first is the

appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of new personality for art also. What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antinous was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me. It is not merely that I paint from him, draw from him, sketch from him. Of course I have done all that. But he is much more to me than a model or a sitter. I won't tell you that I am dissatisfied with what I have done of him, or that his beauty is such that Art cannot express it. There is nothing that Art cannot express, and I know that the work I have done, since I met Dorian Gray, is good work, is the best work of my life. But in some curious way his personality has suggested to me an entirely new manner in art, an entirely new mode of style. I see things differently, I think of them differently. I can now re-create life in a way that was hidden from me before."

Dorian himself, though certainly a quite unsuccessful experiment in Epicureanism, in life as a fine art, is (till his inward spoiling takes visible effect suddenly, and in a moment, at the end of his story) a beautiful creation. But his story is also a vivid, though carefully considered, exposure of the corruption of a soul, with a very plain moral, pushed home, to the effect that vice and crime make people coarse and ugly. General readers, nevertheless, will probably care less for this moral, less for the fine, varied, largely appreciative culture

of the writer, in evidence from page to page, than for the story itself, with its adroitly managed supernatural incidents, its almost equally wonderful applications of natural science; impossible, surely, in fact, but plausible enough in fiction. Its interest turns on that very old theme, old because based on some inherent experience or fancy of the human brain, of a double life: of Döppelgänger — not of two *persons*, in this case, but of the man and his portrait; the latter of which, as we hinted above, changes, decays, is spoiled, while the former, through a long course of corruption, remains, to the outward eye, unchanged, still in all the beauty of a seemingly immaculate youth — "the devil's bargain." But it would be a pity to spoil the reader's enjoyment by further detail. We need only emphasise, once more, the skill, the real subtlety of art, the ease and fluidity withal of one telling a story by word of mouth, with which the consciousness of the supernatural is introduced into, and maintained amid, the elaborately conventional, sophisticated, disabused world Mr. Wilde depicts so cleverly, so mercilessly. The special fascination of the

piece is, of course, just there — at that point of contrast. Mr. Wilde's work may fairly claim to go with that of Edgar Poe, and with some good French work of the same kind, done, probably, in more or less conscious imitation of it.

XI

MR. GEORGE MOORE AS AN ART CRITIC

DAILY CHRONICLE, JUNE 10, 1893

MR. GEORGE MOORE AS AN ART CRITIC

"*Modern Painting*" by George Moore. (London, Walter Scott.)

THE writer of this clever book deserves to be heard about his opinions on fine art, and especially on the somewhat vexed subject of "Modern Painting." He deserves to be heard, because he has a right to those opinions, having taken more pains than critics of contemporary art sometimes do to know from within what he is writing about; while he writes with all the courage of opinions thus sincerely formed, so as to keep the attention of the reader fixed to the very last page. If these qualities make him a pungent critic of what he disapproves, of what he may think mistaken general tendencies in art, or of particular works in which this or that artist seems to fall below

his own proper level, they make him also — those qualities of painstaking, of conviction and liveliness — a very animating guide to the things he loves, and in particular to the modern painting of France, of which we in England still know so little, though a large number of us desire to know more.

With all his French intuitiveness and *gaillardise* Mr. Moore is a patient teacher, knows what and how to explain to "those that are without," and explains clearly. The persons, or professional bodies of persons whom he attacks, would, of course, have a reply; and the more permanently true, certainly the more delightful parts of his volume, at all events for the sincere lover of art, are his chapters of positive appreciation concerning the French masters of his choice — Ingres, Degras, Millet and others. Mr. Moore, at least as far as French art is concerned, is catholic in his taste.

Mr. Moore makes so pleasant a guide to French art partly because he is in full sympathy with France — French scenery, the French character. Now the genius of Ingres is cosmopolitan, like that of those old Greek

artists with whom Mr. Moore fearlessly ranks him. But Mr. Moore does not love cosmopolitanism in art; he thinks, perhaps rightly, that art is in its very nature a matter of personal, or, in its largest groupings, of national, inspiration. To be cosmopolitan, he tells us, to be one and the same at all times and places, is the somewhat doubtful privilege of science. He might urge, perhaps, in the presence of the works of Ingres, that the French are the Greeks of our contemporary world, and that with both alike a certain *cosmopolitanism* was, in truth, an element of *national* character. But then Ingres is also certainly academic, in a high degree; and Mr. Moore has no love for academies, at least in art, in regard to which territory he holds that to be something of a gipsy (it is his own figure) to have no law and no responsibilities except to one's own native preference, is the veritable citizenship. And yet Mr. Moore really has the secret of Ingres, of that somewhat abstract, academic, cosmopolitan and uncoloured painting of which *La Source* is the best known example.

"Think of the learning and the love that were necessary for the accomplishment of such exquisite

simplifications. Never did pencil follow an outline with such penetrating and unwearying passion, or clasp and enfold it with such simple and sufficient modelling. Nowhere can you detect a starting-point or a measurement taken: it seems to have grown as a beautiful tendril grows, and every curve sways as mysteriously, and the perfection seems as divine. Beside it Dürer would seem crabbed and puzzle-headed; Holbein would seem angular and geometrical; Da Vinci would seem vague; and I hope that no critic by partial quotation will endeavour to prove me guilty of having said that Ingres was a greater artist than Da Vinci. I have not said any such thing: I have merely striven by aid of comparison to bring before the reader some sense of the miraculous beauty of one of Ingres's finest pencil drawings."

That is said of one of Ingres's pencil drawings in the Louvre, a study for the *Odalisque*. How different, how unmistakably different, alike in germ and development, was the genius of Corot! Mr. Moore, with no effect of incongruity, treats of them, side by side, in a single chapter. Corot, the elusive and evanescent master of Barbizon, whose work he also values duly, loves better probably than that of the very definite and half-classic Ingres, is, however, far more difficult to write about. He is ingeniously compared with Rembrandt.

"They painted with the values — that is to say, with what remains on the palette when abstraction has been made of the colouring matter — a delicate neutral tint of infinite subtlety and charm; and it is with this, the evanescent and impalpable soul of the vanished colours, that the most beautiful pictures are painted. Corot, too, is a conspicuous example of this mode of painting. His right to stand among the world's colourists has never, so far as I know, been seriously contested, his pictures are almost void of colouring matter — a blending of grey and green, and yet the result is of a richly coloured evening."

Corot and Rembrandt, indeed, arrived at the same goal by similar methods.

"Rembrandt told all that a golden ray falling through a darkened room awakes in a visionary brain; Corot told all that the grey light of morning and evening whispers in the pensive mind of the elegaic poet. The story told was widely different, but the manner of telling was the same. One, attenuated in the light, the other attenuated in the shadow. Both sacrificed the corners with a view of fixing the attention on the one spot in which the soul of the picture lives."

The reader may now judge fairly of Mr. Moore's manner of writing; may think there is something in it of the manner of the artists he writes of. It is perhaps a surprise, yet certainly of a pleasant sort, to find one who is so hard in his characterisation of what may be not ungently called "vulgar errors" in

matters of art, so reverent and delicate when he comes to treat of things delicate. He seems to be really in possession of their "secret" as of Sisley also and Chavannes, of Manet, and of Monet, who with sparkling magic — or trick — paints "in a series of little dots." He is "the only painter to whom the word *impressionism* may be reasonably applied."

"Not with half-tints in which colour disappears are Monet and his school concerned, but with the brilliant vibration of colour in the full light, with open spaces, where the light is reflected back and forward, and nature is but a prism filled with dazzling and iridescent tints."

There is much besides in this volume of considerable interest, but of which there is hardly space to speak here. In common, these chapters have certainly this merit: that, by their very conviction, their perfervid conviction, they arouse the general reader, lost perhaps in a general sleep of conventional ideas, at the very least to combat so incisive a visitor, — put up his back perhaps by a claim for unfamiliar views; challenge him to come honestly to convictions for himself, different enough, it may be from Mr. Moore's.

A lover of French art, in its various phases, the drift of Mr. Moore's charge against contemporary English art, especially under academic patronage, is that it is not vernacular; that the degenerate sons of Reynolds and Constable are leaving their native earth, and with it the roots and sources of their own proper strength, actually for this very France of his own preference. Impressionism, to use that word, in the absence of any fitter one, — the impressionism which makes his own writing on art in this volume so effective, is, in short, the secret both of his likes and dislikes, his hatred of what he thinks conventional and mechanic, together with his very alert and careful evaluation of what comes home to him as straightforward, whether in Reynolds or Rubens, or Ruysdael; in Japan, in Paris or in modern England; with Mr. Whistler, for instance, and Mr. Sargent; his belief in the personal, the incontrollable. Above all that can be learnt in art, he would assure us, — beyond all that can be had of teachers — there is something there, something in every veritable work of art, of the incommunicable, of what is unique, and this is, perhaps, the one thing

really of value in art. As a personal quality or power it will vary greatly, in the case of this or that work or workman, in its appeal to those who, being outsiders in the matter of art, are nevertheless sensitive and sincerely receptive, towards it. It will vary also, in a lesser degree, even to those who in this matter *really know*. But to the latter, at all events, preference in art will be nothing less than conviction, and the estimate of artistic power and product, in every several case, an object of no manner of doubt at all, such as may well give a man, as in Mr. Moore's own case, the courage of his opinions. In such matter opinion is, in fact, of the nature of the sensations one cannot help.

XII

SHADWELL'S DANTE

(PURGATORIO I — XXVII)

This article was contributed as an Introduction to *The Purgatory of Dante Alighieri (Purgatorio I—XXVII). An Experiment in Literal Verse Translation by Charles Lancelot Shadwell.* London, 1892.

Mr. Shadwell has since completed his version of The Purgatory, (XXVIII—XXXIII).

SHADWELL'S DANTE

"SA réputation s'affermira toujours parcequ'on ne le lit guère,[1]" says Voltaire of Dante: and just there certainly he would seem to have overpassed the limit of his critical method, its capacity for dealing with great matters. Yet Voltaire did but reflect the general unfitness of the last century in regard to the Middle Age, of whose spirit Dante is the central embodiment; for, late in that century, the "universal-minded" Goethe himself explains, much to the surprise of the reader of to-day, why, passing through Assisi, he inspected carefully an average specimen of old Roman architecture, but was careful not to inspect the frescoes of Giotto in the church of Saint Francis, work, done, it

[1] *Dictionnaire Philosophique.* Art. Dante.

has been thought, under Dante's immediate influence.[1]

We have certainly "changed all that;" and the unaffected interest of our own generation in the *Divina Commedia* is more than a mere element of the mediævalism which marks the later half of the nineteenth century. The causes of this mediævalism, which has at least secured for posterity what three careless centuries had left us of the art of the Middle Age, would probably reduce themselves in the main to the influence of reaction. That poetic period, poetic as we see it, perhaps a little illusively, has been a refuge from the mere prose of our own day as we see it, most of all in England. But there seems to be something more than just this, something more positive in character, and in closer alliance with the genius of the nineteenth century itself, in the interest which Dante commands among us, — his popularity with the many, his sufficiency for the devotion of a select number of admirable scholars, whose fault assuredly it will not be if the minutest point about him or his work remains obscure.

---

[1] *Ital. Reise.* Letter from Perugia, 25 Oct. 1786.

By way of explaining such devotion in contrast to the indifference of preceding centuries it would of course be enough to say that Dante was a great poet, one of the greatest of poets, and that in our own age, sympathetic, eclectic, cosmopolitan, full of curiosity and abounding in the "historic sense," certains barriers to a right appreciation of him have been removed. He has handled on a grand scale the grandest of subjects, in a way which after all fair comparison must be declared unique, and so as to make it his own — that immense intellectual deposit of thirteen believing centuries — with a generous outlay of himself, of his own richly endowed and richly cultivated personality, of what is most intimate and peculiar in it. On scrupulous orthodoxy he has impressed a deep personal originality, after a manner to which we may well think one only in the course of many generations could have been equal. The religious ideal of that age, the theoretic construction which catholicism puts on the facts of nature and history, is for him, in spite of an invading rationalism already at work about him, itself also still an authentic fact. Devoutly assuming the reality of that ideal, he

goes boldly through the world in all its variety of good and evil, with powers of insight everywhere adequate to its wonder, its beauty and sorrow, the awful experiences of the saved, the tried, the lost. His subject, like the course of his own life which had brought it home so close to him, has its harsh episodes; but he did not forget that his design was after all to treat it as a literary artist, to charm his readers; and with no disloyalty therefore to its essential character, he has displayed in his work a wonderful urbanity and composure, the craftiest interweaving of its parts, a deliberate evenness of execution, a sense of unity and proportion, yet also a command of every sort of minute literary beauty, an expressiveness, a care for style and rhythm at every point, the evidence of which increases upon the critical reader as his attention becomes microscopic. No one anywhere near him in time had united powers and acquirements so varied, in a literary monument so consistently realised. Consider, for instance, the philosophic power of Canto XXV. of the *Purgatory*, side by side with the moral power of Canto XVII. 91-139, with the moral delicacy of Canto III., in the

matter of Manfred especially, and with the various descriptive effects of Canto II. Yes, Dante is in very deed a great poet, great enough to be independent of the mere mental habits of one age or another. Yet he too had to pass through ages with no natural ear for him; while it is only the good fortune of the present generation that its turn for eclecticism, removing prejudice, has fitted it for a really intelligent and critical study of Dante's work, encouraged for its reward therein by certain special aspects of Dante's genius which are in close kinship with its own. The artistic and literary work of the Middle Age, the art of Dante's friend Giotto for example, we value in large measure for its very strangeness, its unlikeness to what is nearer in date to ourselves. But Dante, remote and strange as he may be, in sentiment, in his politics, and for many by his religious faith, is nevertheless found to meet certain tendencies, actually in us, halfway; and by expressing does but further promote them.

One of the points then, a point of manner, so to speak, at which Dante repelled the last century while he directly attracts our own, is

the minuteness of his handiwork, of his habits of observation, and of the equivalent expression, or fine shade of expression. Such care for the elaboration of detail in Dante's work had something in common with the art of that day, with what must be called its *naïveté*, as we feel it when Dante writes:

> As birds that seek to Nilus warm
> In winter, now in squadron form,
> Now swifter flight design
> And lengthen into line:
> XXIV. 64-66.

or

> Folk beneath its branches there
> Crying I know not what there were,
> With hands uplifted all,
> As eager children call
>
> To one who grants not their request:
> But still to give their longing zest
> Upholds aloft the prize
> Nor hides it from their eyes:
> XXIV. 106-111.

and again in the so circumstantial note he takes of the fact that Dante's still mortal body casts a shadow among the shadowless people of the other world:—

> That very flesh is this
> Whereof his body is.
> V. 33.

In Dante's minuteness of touch there was in fact something of that art of miniature painting,

Ch' alluminare è chiamata in Parisi.

Our own delight in it, the welcome we give to minute detail of that kind, uncompromising "realists" as we must needs be, connects itself with the empirical character of our science, our philosophic faith in the concrete, the particular. To the age of Johnson abstraction, generalisation, seemed to be of the essence of art and poetry, a principle which the taste of the nineteenth century has inverted in favour of that circumstantial manner of which every Canto of the *Divina Commedia* would afford illustration.

But the modern artist, the modern student of art, of Dante's art, while he demands it in any record of the external world, will value this minuteness, this minute perfection, even more perhaps in the treatment of mental phenomena, when the intelligence which touched so finely the niceties of visible colour and outline turns to the invisible world, noting there also with a like subtlety the intimacies of the soul. The modern, as such, is undeni-

ably a somewhat skilful psychologist. — We have lived so long with ourselves! And just here surely we find another link between the peculiarities of Dante's genius and the "subjectivities" of the characteristic student of to-day. Amid the larger outlooks of the *Divina Commedia* we are again and again reminded that its author is also the poet of the *Vita Nuova*. His own sensibility, already so strongly in evidence there, makes him now an equally delicate interpreter of the mental or spiritual ways of others.

> And in the hour, before the morn,
> When wakes the swallow's note forlorn,
> Haply amid her singing
> Her woes to memory bringing,
>
> The hour when loosed from thought our mind
> Leaves pilgrim-like her flesh behind,
> And borne along in dreams
> Almost a prophet seems,
>
> Even then to me was vision given:
>
> IX. 13-19.

And in accordance with what we might have expected, the sensibility, the fineness of touch, there indicated, is at its height in the placid and temperate regions of the *Purgatorio* —

a realm of grey but clear light: — it is there that the delicacies, alike of the visible and the invisible world, really tell.

And there is another reason why for the modern student the *Purgatorio* should be the favourite section of the *Divina Commedia*. An age of faith, if such there ever were, our age certainly is not: an age of love, all its pity and self-pity notwithstanding, who shall say? — in its religious scepticism, however, especially as compared with the last century in its religious scepticism, an age of hope, we may safely call it, of a development of religious hope or hopefulness, similar in tendency to the development of the doctrine of Purgatory in the church of the Middle Age: —

quel secondo regno
Ove l' umano spirito si purga: —

a world of merciful second thoughts on one side, of fresh opportunities on the other, useful, serviceable, endurable, in contrast alike with that *mar sì crudele* of the *Inferno*, and the blinding radiancy of Paradise. In our own century protestantism itself would seem to have become conscious of a certain want in regard to the "hope of immortality": con-

scious that it has lost something in passing from the doctrinal symmetry and completeness of Dante's position; from his assurance that nothing can

> hinder Love's eternal will
> So long as hope is seen
> To wear a shred of green.
>
> III. 134-5.

that

> boundless grace
> Hath arms of such a large embrace,
> That they will straight admit
> Whatever turns to It.
>
> III. 122-3.

It would take too much space to follow out the sentiment here suggested. The reader of this translation may be interested in doing that for himself, in connexion with the belief in a constant, helpful, beneficent interaction between the souls of the living and the dead, in the immense grace still obtainable for the departed by prayer here.

> If for our weal their word be said,
> Were it not ours to lend them aid
> By deed, by speech, the fruit
> That comes of kindly root?
>
> Yea, well it were with helpful love
> Their earthly blemish to remove,

That light and clean from stain
The star-set spheres they gain.
XI. 31-36.

And the breadth of Dante's theological horizon connects itself with that generous eclecticism which finds in "the house of many mansions," due place for Virgil and other sublime spirits of the Pagan world amid the infants unbaptised of the dispensation of Christ; as also with a certain mundane sense, throughout his great work, of poetry and scholarship, of classic or Pagan poesy holding its own beside the poetry of inspiration, as the Empire subsists side by side with the Church. —

La morta poesì risurga!

Awake dead Poesy and inspire
The servant of the Muses' choir.
I. 7.

Like his persuasion that earthly and personal gifts will not lose their charm and purpose in another life, that, "though we know not what we shall be," Casella will still exercise there his wonted musical skill,[1] Dante's large-minded

[1] Know ye not we are but the worm
Born the angelic moth to form?
X. 124-5.

treatment of all forms of classic power and achievement marks a stage of progress, from the narrower sentiment of the Middle Age, towards "humanism," towards the mental attitude of the Renaissance and of the modern world.

A minute sense of the external world and its beauties, a minute sense of the phenomena of the mind, of what is beautiful and of interest there, a demand for wide and cheering outlooks in religion, for a largeness of spirit in its application to life: — these are the special points of contact between Dante and the genius of our own century. And withal Dante is a great poet, one of the greatest of poets, great like Sophocles and Shakespeare by a certain universality in his appeal to men's minds, and independent therefore of the special sensibilities of a particular age. If the characteristic minds of the last century, for instance, were apt to undervalue him, that was because they were themselves of an age not of cosmopolitan genius, but of singularly limited gifts, gifts temporary and local, so to speak, the products of which survive, for the most part, only indirectly by efforts of historic

rehabilitation. And as Dante is not only popular but has intelligible reasons for his popularity with us, there have been in our day translations of him excellent in various ways. With the exception however of some portions of Longfellow's, and in considerable degree of Cayley's, they fail in the "mysticity" which is so characteristic of the original, a quality in which Rossetti would have done justice to the *Divina Commedia*, if we may judge by his version of the *Vita Nuova*, so studiously close yet so spontaneous, so much the converse of second-hand in its effect upon us.

The writer of the translation here presented to English readers, having allowed me the pleasure of seeing his work from time to time during its growth, has now asked me to say a few candid words by way of preface. His reproduction of a poem full certainly of "the patience of genius" is itself a work of rare patience and scholarship, conspicuously free from

> the haste
> By which all action is disgraced.
>
> la fretta
> Che l' onestade ad ogni atto dismaga.

I speak of his version however as but a general reader, having no special knowledge of Dante such as his. Still, interesting as I know his has been and will be to scholars, it is for the general reader after all that translations are made. Such general readers then will, I believe, find here a translation made in the sense of what I have tried to indicate as characteristic of the *Divina Commedia*, a version singular in its union of minute and sensitive fidelity almost to the very syllables of the original, with that general sense of composure and breadth of effect which gives to the great mediæval poem the air of a "classic." It is this note which the metre of Marvell's Ode itself strikes, the note of a dignified plain-song, capable however on demand of a high degree of expressiveness. The translator has explained in detail his reasons for adopting it; its essential equivalence to Dante's terza rima. With a writer whose vocabulary is so significant and searched through as that of Dante, whose words withal are so sensitive and picturesque, there can be no fidelity which does not include a certain literal exactness. Partly because he is so

minute a "realist," he is one of those artists whose general effect largely depends on vocabulary, on the minute particles of which his work is wrought, on the colour and outline of single words and phrases, and this must obviously be lost in anything like free or haphazard translation. It seems obvious that to convey the impression of such work into another language, translation must be true in detail, and supposing rhythm and vernacular effect secured, the more literal it is the better. The translator's business with Dante, then, may be likened to the copying of a drawing or other design upon transparent tracing-paper. Let the eye be true, the hand steady, the pencil fine, and, making sure of the fidelity of its movement from point to point, the translator, hardly less than his reader, will be surprised at the large and general faithfulness of the reproduction thus assured. In such way the reader of this translation will, I think, from time to time have a pleasant sense of the reproductive capacity of our language, as he compares the opposite pages of the Cantos which follow. Let him turn for instance to Canto V. 52-57, XII. 16-69 and XIV. 97-123.

So far as I know, nothing quite like this has yet been done for presenting Dante to English readers, in union with the attractiveness of metrical form, and a scholarly care for English style. Out of the very literality here maintained has come an evenness, a dignity of manner, a poetic effect, wholly unarchaic, and true to what must be called the un-provincial or cosmopolitan air of the *Divina Commedia*— cosmopolitan, though Dante's work be nevertheless the peculiar and perfect flower of the Middle Age. Dante has his varieties of power and appeal to the reader; some readers may think that he rises and falls[1]; he argues, narrates, pauses, surprises us with sudden heat of feeling, as in the grand outburst against Italy, drawn from him at the sight of Sordello's generous welcome of Virgil: he has his patient moods, he permits himself much harshness of imagery and vocabulary, though this too is subdued by the repose natural to the width

[1] Thou seest, my Reader, how I raise
My theme, nor should it thee amaze
If greater art sustain
The matter of my strain.
IX. 70-72.

and greatness of his theme. His translator following him, with humble scholarly purpose, has really trod in his steps; rising and falling with him, if so it be; and he has been perhaps not least successful in the speculative or philosophic passages (Canto IV. 1-12, for example, and XVIII. 19-75), so difficult, yet so fascinating to the modern student of earlier modes of thought than our own.

The true test of a work of imagination, and therefore of any veritable presentment of it in the way of translation, is that it should enfold one, so to speak, in its own atmosphere, that one should feel able to breathe in it. I have had such a feeling in reading what follows. The translator has explained why he left off with a sense of completeness at the end of the twenty-seventh Canto, but studious readers will, I think, regret with me that he found reason so to do.

PRINTED BY SMITH & SALE
EXCHANGE STREET, PORTLAND, MAINE, U. S. A.